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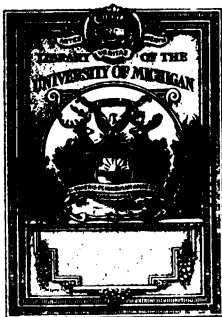
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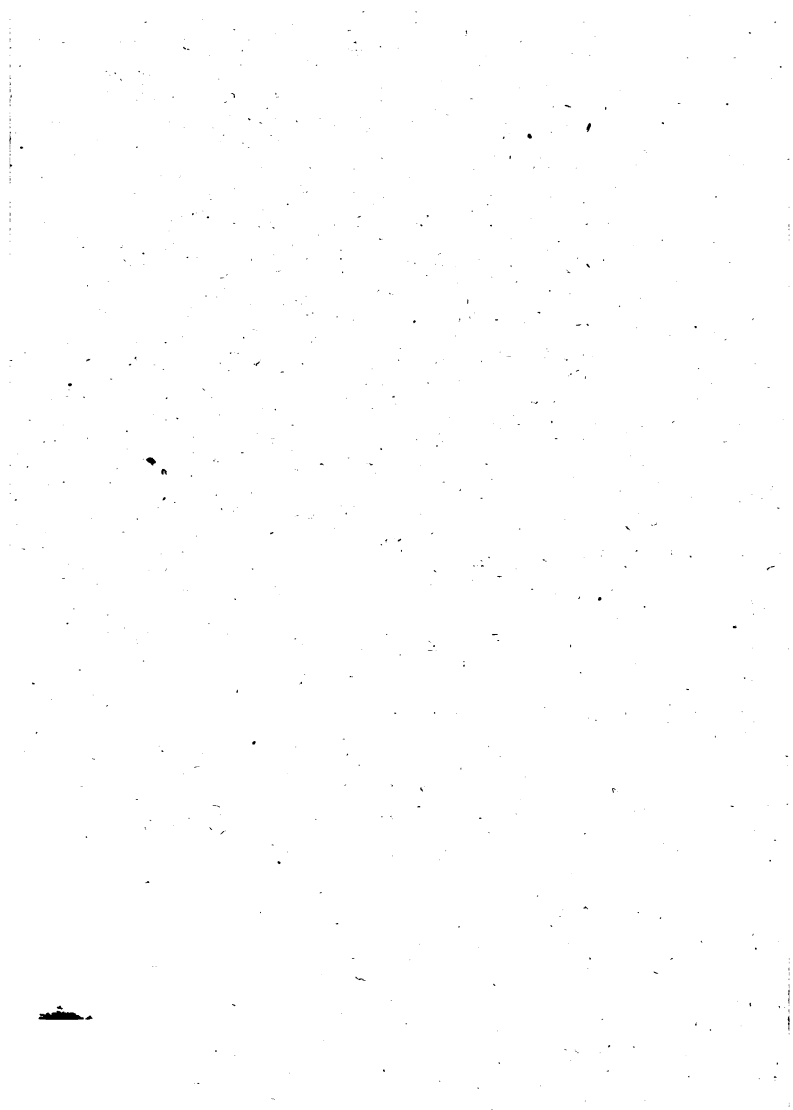
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INCONSEQUENT LIVES

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INCONSEQUENT LIVES.

CHAPTER I.

THE WEDDING.

“Till death us do part.”

THERE was a constant twittering around the church this morning as the sparrows flew in and out among the ivy that draped the great tower down to its base, while below, in the quieter churchyard, where the dead folks slept beneath the grass, the sunshine streamed across the mounds and headstones, and the world seemed purely a place of rest.

In the three or four cottages that faced the church—humble whitewashed dwellings with overhanging roofs of thatch—the windows and doors were mostly open, and the children ran to and fro in the roadway, apparently bubbling over with the happiness of life.

At intervals there came to the doors of the cottages one or other of the housewives living within—now to shake a tablecloth or to empty a basin, and now to watch the children or to take a glance around. And when two or more popped their heads out

together a lengthy bit of gossip not unnaturally ensued.

Apparently the engrossing topic this morning was that of a wedding just about to take place, and the bridegroom and the bride—and more particularly the former—were discussed with a freedom and frankness that evidenced acquaintance with them both. For a wedding, with its clustering hopes and associations, has always a fascination for the feminine mind, and sets free such a swarm of imaginings as keeps the blood strangely astir.

"Well," said Dolly Tredrea to her neighbour, as they stood together in the sunlit road, "I doan't think 'tes much of a catch for Ellen. I doan't like Sam Trewartha meself."

"He got a surly way weth un sometimes."

"Iss; an' 'a comes of a surly lot. They're as sour as Whigs," quoth Dolly. "Or laysteways, so I've heerd. A Maddern for malice an' a Trewartha for temper, they're a match for Owld Uncle Nikklus, they say."

"Sam's a bra'-lookin' youngster, too. I b'leeve 'a got th' finest set o' teeth that ever I seed in a man."

"Iss; he's a cliver-lookin' youngster. His outside's daycent enough. But thee caan't maake a makerl out of a dogfish. I've heerd Joe say that hunderds o' times."

"Well, I doan't howld much weth they sort o' marr-riages—a farmer's darter weth a fisherman's son. It doan't seem altogether to rayson. But I s'pose th' young folks know what they want."

"Tha's all very well in its way," said Dolly. "But ef I'd plenty o' jugs to choose from, I wedn taake wan weth a crack, would thee?"

"I caan't say I should," quoth Peggy, "onless I took un for shaw."

"An' ef she's marr-rin' for looks, you, she'll soon find out her mistake."

"Ah, well," said Peggy, by way of a clincher, "ef we know'd too much 'bout our men 'fore we married, I s'pose we'd none of us run th' risk."

"Tha's a poor sort o' comfort, Peggy."

"'Tis th' best in a poor sort o' world."

And with this old Peggy, having shaken her tablecloth, mumblingly made her way indoors.

Meanwhile, wholly oblivious of the shadows which were thus gratuitously evoked on her behalf, in a rambling cottage farther up the roadway the young bride was nervously preparing for her fête.

The bright spring sunshine shone upon the hills, and the air was full of the fragrance from the meadows, where the unmown grass was ankle-deep. In the little orchard on the hill-slope behind, a couple of blackbirds were whistling at intervals, while the cluckings of chickens and the quacking of ducks sounded through the cottage the whole day long.

Here, in the tiny, low-roofed bedroom, where the trailing roses crept across the panes, the south wind was faintly audible this morning as it fluttered the long white valance and blinds; but Ellen Trevorrow, as she stood at the looking-glass twisting her coal-black hair into curls, was too much excited to notice the wind-breath, even when it coolingly played across her cheeks.

Her sister, who was bustling about in the bedroom—occasionally assisting Ellen with her toilet, but otherwise busied in adorning herself—kept up

such a constant and irrepressible chattering, that Ellen could with difficulty hear herself speak. In addition to which, the little world of her consciousness was so bewilderingly full of unrest, that something of the vagueness and bewilderment of dream-land seemed to enter into everything about her to-day.

The whitewashed bedroom was littered with her belongings, and, in spite of the day-dreams that checkered her thoughts, Ellen began to feel a growing impatience as the moments slipped by and so much remained to do.

"I knaw I shaan't be ready in time," broke fretfully from her at last.

"Le' *me* help 'ee, dear," replied Phyllis, who was now all a-twitter with life.

And between them, though gossiping as busily as sparrows, the sisters were rapidly completing their toilets, when the mother's voice was heard at the foot of the stairs.

"Are 'ee most ready up there, you girls? I've made a cup o' tay for 'ee both."

"We'll be down in a minute now, mawther," shouted Phyllis, who was buttoning Ellen's shoes.

"Come up, mawther, an' see how I'm lookin'!" added Ellen from her seat on the bed.

So the mother toiled up to inspect her, panting loudly on every stair.

"How'm I lookin'?" Ellen asked, rather anxiously.

"Why, thee'rt lookin' a pictur, that thee art! I never seed a puttier sight!" said the mother, with a kind, fondling smile.

And truly Ellen looked at the moment as attractive as one could desire. Tall and shapely to

an exceptional extent, with the full, soft curves of approaching womanhood—for her charms were by no means Northern in their type—the girl had the brilliant, passionate eyes and the silken abundance of coal-black hair that occasionally characterise the women of the bay, and had withal a proud yet graceful carriage, which she well knew how to use to effect.

And the mother flushed with pride as she watched her, in spite of a little ache in her heart.

“Es there anything wrong or out o’ place, mawther?”

“Le’ me give ’ee a good look around.”

So Ellen rose up to be inspected, tittering and blushing as she turned.

“Ay, dear! thee’rt as putty as a pictur,” said the mother, with something like a sigh.

“Do ’ee think there’ll be many people there, mawther?”

“Ay, cheeld! there’s some up there now.”

“My! what a lark!” giggled Phyllis. “All th’ village ’ull be lookin’ at us, s’pose!”

But Ellen tossed her long curls disdainfully.

“You wait till it’s your turn,” said she.

“Thee’d better come down,” quoth the mother, “if ayther of ’ee want a cup o’ tay.”

So downstairs they clatteringly went.

There was no one just then in the kitchen, but while they were sipping their tea the brother came up through the garden with a grin on his great healthy face. He was dressed in his “Sunday best” suit, and appeared to be half out of breath.

“There’s quite a crowd up there already!” panted Tom, geeking mischievously in.

The two girls were standing at the long kitchen table, half afraid to sit down for fear of soiling their clothes, and Tom, after eyeing their "antics," burst out into noisy guffaws.

"Why, thee'rt lookin' like a geese-dancer,* Ellen!" cried Tom, all a-grin with delight. "Oh my! what a couple o' guys! Waan't th' boys split weth laughin' at 'ee both!"

"I doan't care," cried Ellen, rather snappishly. "Soon you waan't be able to taise me."

"Sam 'ull do it instead," rejoined Tom.

"I'm sure Sam waan't taise me," quoth Ellen.

"An' I'm sure he will," replied Tom.

"Come, come!" said the peace-loving mother.

And just then the bells began to sound.

"Where's Sam?" cried Ellen, somewhat anxiously. "Run an' see ef he's anywhere in sight."

Tom was out at the gate in an instant, and began to stare up and down the road.

Very soon he was back in the kitchen. "He's comin'—in a trap!" panted Tom.

Ellen pushed away her cup in a hurry, and the mother put the things out of sight.

Meanwhile, Phyllis, who had been staring through the window, ran to the door with a smile.

"Here's uncle—just in time!" she exclaimed.

Uncle Ben gave a whistle as he entered.

"I've haaf a mind to back out," said he. "I doan't think I'll give 'ee 'way, Ellen. B'leeve I'll keep 'ee for meself arter all."

"All'ys jokin', Ben," said the mother.

"So thee'rt goin' to lev' her go, are 'ee, Jennifer?"

* *Geese-dancers*—mummers.

"Here's Sam!" called the watcher at the door.

"Here! Howld her head, will 'ee, Tom?" And a moment after Sam hurried in. "Are 'ee ready, Ellen? Right!—Mornin', mawther.—How are 'ee? Brave, Uncle Ben?"

"Ay, sonny! How are 'ee?"

"Hearty, thaanks!—Come! le's be off, shall us, you?"

"We're all ready, Sam," replied Phyllis.

So out through the garden they went.

At the garden gate Ellen turned suddenly and kissed her mother twice on the cheek. Then, turning to Sam, she asked anxiously:

"Have 'ee got th' ring?"

"Iss, you, tha's right" And he helped her up into the trap.

Tom took his seat beside his sisters, while Sam and Uncle Ben rode in front, and away the party bowled towards the church.

Ellen kept throwing back kisses till the trap turned a corner in the road, on which, with her brow creased with wrinkles, the mother went slowly indoors.

The bells were by this time ringing merrily, and, attracted by their tintinnabulation, like bees by the pounding on a pan, the gossip-loving housewives and the staring-eyed children were clustering together near the door of the church.

Just then the bent old sextoness, in her rusty suit of black, unlocked and opened the door, and the little group began to cackle louder than ever as two or three boys came running up the roadway bawling that the bridegroom and bride were in sight.

"They're comin'! A trapful!" shouted little Tommy Trousers—so called, I have been told, from the unhappy inheritance of somebody's cast-off corduroys. And thereupon the little fellow, full of vivacity, danced up and down in the road with delight.

"They're comin'!" shouted one or two others.

And the gossips were now all agape.

Presently up came the well-filled trap in a style that was evidently meant to be impressive, and would probably have been so—as far as one can judge—if little Tommy Trousers had not tumbled in the roadway as Sam was about to drive up to the gate.

Owing to the shouting and excitement that ensued, the arrival was entirely shorn of *éclat*, and Ellen was aware of a sudden burst of swearing, which so much shocked and humiliated her that the tears sprang into her eyes.

"Sam! Why, Sam!" she exclaimed.

But Sam was not to be quieted till the outrush of anger was spent.

Ellen shivered with a sense of desolation, while her sister coloured hotly in wrath.

"For shame, Sam!" cried Phyllis, turning towards him.

Sam mumbled out something that sounded like an apology, and sullenly drew up the trap at the gate.

Ellen was still trembling with agitation when the party passed clatteringly in through the porch, but the feeling was forgotten in the ceremony that followed and the sense of solemnity which the function induced.

Still, the few grave words of acceptance and re-

nunciation—of acceptance of duties and surrender of self—were uttered with a fuller sense of their significance than Ellen would have dreamed of a few hours ago, and she glanced at Sam tremulously and a little pathetically, as if to implore him to remember them well.

When the party came out into the sunshine they found quite half a score of the villagers had gathered in the churchyard and the roadway beyond, while the low stone wall of the little enclosure had been taken possession of by a troop of children, who were perched on the grassy top in the sunshine watching the scene with curious eyes.

The women, in their noisy feminine fashion, gave a shrill, irregular cheer as the folks emerged from the church, and the children also bawled and shouted till Ellen blushed to the tips of her ears.

“Thaank ’ee! thaank! ’ee, neighbours!” quoth Uncle Ben, with a grin. “We’ll do as much for you when you’re marr-ried,” he added to two or three buxom matrons who stood near the stile with arms akimbo.

“Hear un! All’ys jokin’!” quoth one of the women, with a smile. “When will ’ee ever give over?”

“Why, when I’m marr-ried!” quoth Ben.

At which a roar of laughter good-humouredly burst from all.

But Sam glanced round uneasily to see if they were laughing at him, and then hurried Ellen as rapidly as possible over the stile and into the trap.

Meanwhile, Ben had been searching in his trousers pockets, and now held half-a-dozen coppers in his hand.

“Hooray, boys! here’s somethin’ for sweets!” shouted Ben, as he flung the pennies among the children.

Then, helping Phyllis into the trap, he climbed up after her as fast as he could, while the children scrambled and fought for the pennies with clamour enough to frighten a cow.

As the trap drove away from the churchyard gate, one of the women, rushing suddenly forward, flung over Ellen a handful of rice, and this was followed by handfuls from others, till the whole group was laughing and panting and throwing; and in this way Ellen Trewartha drove back home as a bride.

CHAPTER II.

THEIR FRIENDS AND THEIR WORLD.

THE village where Ellen was in future to reside is one of the most picturesque spots to be found on the shores of Mount's Bay, and especially is this the case with the cliff on whose top stood her house.

Rising with a steep incline from the smooth stretch of sands at its base, and having the quaint little harbour lying almost immediately beneath it, with the serried masts of the fishing boats quite overlooked from its crest, it commands a magnificent prospect right across the sweep of the bay, and inevitably catches the eye from whatever side the village is approached. Penzance and St. Michael's Mount are distinctly visible from it, and the wind-dimpled waters of the bay, dotted with brown-sailed fishing-boats, spread out superbly before it in one immense crescent of blue.

The diversified houses of the village cluster gregariously together on the railed top of the cliff, and spread away up across the climbing undulations that gradually melt in the great open moors, while the heavy, black face of the cliff is usually draped with fishing-nets hung from the railings to dry.

Leaning not unpicturesquely over the nets, with their yellow sou'-westers half hiding their features

and blue woollen guernseys rolled up to their waists, the fishermen linger on the cliff and lounge against the stout iron rail; while their wives, in the cottages opposite, sit in the doorways and knit, or stand in the roadway and gossip with any one willing to talk. And this is the life of the village, except when the boats are at sea.

The cottage which the newly-wedded couple were to henceforth consider as their home stood a few steps back from the roadway, with a hand's-breadth of pavement in front. It was an old-fashioned, stone-built dwelling, with a wooden porch and a tall thatched roof, and with a square stone chimney of massive proportions standing out like a buttress at the end of the house. The cottage consisted of three rooms — a brick-floored kitchen of the most primitive construction, and a couple of bedrooms equally rude. There were but three windows in the whole of the building — all of them facing the harbour and the bay — and the only door it could boast of was that which fronted the street; while the scanty furniture was of the plainest description, and the walls were barren of ornaments at present, with the exception of an old-fashioned timepiece which had been presented by Uncle Ben. Yet, none the less, Ellen was as proud of her home as a ten-hours' bride could reasonably be, and bustled about in the kitchen this evening with a whimsical combination of fussiness and dignity which made Uncle Ben and her mother interchange many a smile.

"Dear cheeld! how delighted she seems! 'Tis a pleasure to watch her!"

“That it es!”

“I onnly hope she’ll all’ys be as merry.”

“God bless her! I hope so,” quoth Ben.

And Ellen, who caught them smiling at her, smiled radiantly back in return.

Such a gathering as there was in the kitchen this evening Ellen had never played a part in before.

About half a score old or middle-aged folks, and another half-score of youngsters and maidens, were clustered picturesquely around the couple of tables which stood end-to-end in the middle of the kitchen—one of them having been borrowed for the occasion from the neighbours who lived in the adjoining house—and right in the middle of the table, stuck in a tub of sand, stood half-a-dozen tallow candles, and every one alight! To add to the exceptional character of the display, in the centre of a couple of leaf-dressed barrel-hoops, that depended from one of the rafters, hung a grinning turnip-lantern which had been carefully manufactured by Tom. From the eyes and mouth of the swinging grotesque came an evil, bloodshot glare, while a whiff, as of roasting turnip, occasionally filled the room. But who had time to think of these things, with so much noise and merriment about? The wedding-guests were as oblivious of them as they were of the stealthy flight of time.

Sam’s father and mother and his bald-headed grandfather were of course among the company on this eventful evening, and played their parts with due effect; while his sister Lizzie, a black-eyed hoiden with a face alive with sensuous

passion, romped with the boys to her heart's content.

Nor was Phyllis Trevorrow (that sly little puss!) forgetful of her feminine rights and advantages, and of what one might call the delights of the chase. For Long 'Siah Hosking having "made up to her" in a rather sheepish and shame-faced way, Phyllis, with a mixture of archness and slyness, must needs keep him dangling around her all night—a proceeding which Lizzie, in her envy, was by no means inclined to overlook.

"Look at Phyllis there, making up to 'Siah!" exclaimed Lizzie to one of her friends. "She's a sly little hussy, like her sister; she knaws how to manage her cards. What that silly gayte gawk can see in her I'm sure I doan't know."

"Nor do I."

"S'pose she caan't git a shiner up in Treen, you. She's fo'ced to come to Newlyn like her sister in order to pick up a man."

"Iss, you, tha's just 'bout th' size of it," added Lizzie's friend, turning up her nose.

But Phyllis, who was unconscious of their criticisms, kept on joking and laughing through it all.

"What funny things you say, Mr. Hosking!" she was remarking to 'Siah just then; "wherever did you pick up such nonsense—'Why's a girl like a cherry?'—how absurd!"

"'Cause she's good enough to ayte," answered 'Siah, bursting out into hearty guffaws. "Now, esn' that a downright rayle good wan?" he asked, when he got back his breath.

"I doan't know what ud happen ef I praised 'ee. You *might* git consayted, you know."

"There's no fear o' that," replied 'Siah. "Jus' you try, ef you're anyways in doubt."

Phyllis dimpled her cheeks in an instant.

"I'll take it on trust," she rejoined.

"Enjoyin' yourself, Phyllis?" asked Ellen, as she passed with a plateful of cake.

"Iss, thank 'ee, Ellen," said Phyllis.

And 'Siah grinned up to his ears.

Meanwhile Sam swaggered round like a turkey-cock, swelling with importance and pride, and kept eating and drinking so incessantly that Ellen had to beg him to stop.

"I wedn' take so much o' that beer, Sam; I'm 'fraid 'ull go up in your head."

"Go'se home weth 'ee, Ellen," quoth the bridegroom; "I'm as steady on me legs as the table. Here, gi's thy haand fur a daance!"

Ellen tried to refuse the proffered compliment, but Sam would not now be gainsaid, and, much to her unexpressed annoyance, Ellen had to submit to his whim.

The dance was a ridiculous exhibition, as Sam was decidedly "fresh," and Ellen bit her lips with vexation as she heard the smothered fun they evoked.

But Sam, who believed they were doing famously, slapped his "little woman" heartily on the back, and swore that with such a good partner he could dance the soles out of his shoes.

As soon as she could get away from him, Ellen went to her mother with her griefs.

"Thee must beer weth un, cheeld," quoth the mother; "thee took un for better or for worse. And besides, 'tes escusable this ev'nin'; thee must over-look a little slip for wance."

Ellen shook her long curls rather tragically.

"But he made us look such fools!" she exclaimed.

"Thee needn' fret 'bout that," said the mother; "we've all looked like fools in our time."

"I'm disappointed in un!" cried Ellen.

"Thee'll change thy tune to-morra, my cheeld."

"She's a pretty young woman," quoth the grandfather, "and as light as a feather on th' foot."

And Ellen, who overheard the comment, felt that, after all, *something* remained.

By-and-by eating and drinking again became the "order of the day," and 'twas really amusing to see how 'Siah kept playing the shiner to Phyllis in his awkward yet good-natured way.

In fact, so assiduous was 'Siah in his attentions, that he attracted the notice of the bridegroom, who was now in a jovial mood.

"Tha's right, me boy!" Sam cried loudly, slapping 'Siah heavily on the back. "Thee stick to Phyllis, owld chap! Thee caan't make a better choice, 'Siah, ef thee search round from Newlyn to St. Ives. *Here's* a sample for 'ee to look at! Where'll see a better wan than she?" And catching Ellen as she was passing, Sam gave her a great, hearty kiss. "She's th' darlin' o' me heart, bless her blushes! May you all git as good a wan, boys!"

"Hear, hear!" cried the men-folk delightedly, while the women-folk looked on and laughed.

But Ellen was a little bit indignant.

"'Tes onnly my fun, boys," said Sam.

"'Twill be our turn wan day," quoth Lizzie.

"I doan't keer how soon," said her friend.

And Lizzie hummed saucily to herself:

“ ‘ We’re all dry drinking on’t;
We’re all dry drinking on’t;
The piper kissed the fiddler’s wife,
And I caan’t sleep for thinking on’t ! ’ ”

It was drawing on well towards midnight before the last guest had gone home, and Ellen and Sam were left together surveying the relics of the feast.

“ Well, I’ve had a jolly day, dash my buttons! Hope they’ll all be as jolly,” muttered Sam.

“ Oh, I dare say they will,” replied Ellen; “ we can make them just as happy as we please.”

And Sam, looking fondly up at her, said : “ Ay, Ellen, girl, so we can.”

CHAPTER III.

TRANSPLANTING A LIFE.

"Sith none that breatheth living aire doth know
Where is that happy land of Faëry."

WHAT with neighbours to get acquainted with and flatteries to receive, and the thousand and one little happinesses which drift to a newly-married wife, Ellen found her wedded life at its outset as pleasant as one could desire.

Besides, there was the actual novelty of her surroundings, as well as the more fanciful novelty of her moods. Reared in a small and poverty-stricken farmhouse—in reality, a cottage with a few fields attached—Ellen had spent her life among the cows and the chickens and the great grunting porkers of which she was so proud, and practically knew as little of the fishing life of Newlyn as Sam knew of milking or butter-making, or, in fact, of a rural life at all.

Consequently, the picturesque life of Newlyn had for Ellen a novelty and interest which her neighbours but dimly understood. The fleet starting off for the fishing-grounds at sunset, or riding at its nets in the bay in the dusk of the warm summer night; the return to the harbour through the splendours of the sunrise, and the line of boats drawn up on the beach, with their nets spread out on the sands to dry—for Ellen these commonplace sights of the village were like the streets of a city to a girl new to towns.

Then the weaving and mending of nets in the lofts, the "bulking" of fish in the long damp cellars, and the caulking and tarring of boats on the "hard," were all of them sights which appealed to her fancy and afforded her many an hour's delight; while the animated sales that were held on the beach never altogether lost their unfamiliarity, and could always agreeably freshen her thoughts,

The village, it was true, had but few rural touches, notwithstanding that it straggled along the slopes of the hills; but the daily compensations were so many and so various that, though she missed the picturesque milking-time and the feeding of the poultry and pigs, Ellen felt her new life and her husband were well worth the cost of the change.

A familiar, companionable existence was this upon which she had chanced—a life of tiny, scantily-furnished cottages, with ruddy-faced children playing around the doors—a life of labouring men and women, hard-handed, narrow-minded, weighted with cares—a life reduced almost to elementary proportions, so significant was the list of developments it lacked. And yet a life that for Sam and Ellen seemed scarcely in any way inadequate or bare, so unfamiliar to their minds was the idea of an existence whose conditions should be other or broader than this. So that the spell of the sunshine and the sea had nothing to allay or to beat down within them, but had only, as it were, to fall warmly on the germinating hopes in their hearts.

Phyllis constantly came down to visit her sister—at first, in fact, almost every day; though it ended, in a kind of compromise, by her coming about three times a week, as the mother could not part with her

oftener, and, indeed, could but ill spare her then.

Tom usually came down on Sunday, with a smile on his great sunburned face ; and Uncle Ben dropped in occasionally in order to see that everything was right. But the mother found her way down but rarely ; Ellen mostly had to go up to her.

And proud though Ellen was to play the housewife and dispense hospitality to her friends—with her left hand, to judge by its prominence, doing twice as much work as her right—I think she was even prouder of being petted in the dear old home up among the hills.

The way in which she fussed around the poultry and hung about the staring-eyed calves was downright amusing to her brother ; but the mother understood it, she thought. Even the cawing of the crows in the three or four elms near the house seemed something of which she never wearied. “How homely it sounds !” she would say. While never had she been to her mother one half so affectionate as now.

“Ah, cheeld,” the mother would sometimes say to her, “I’m afeerd thee left thy owld home too soon. Thee’rt like a lamb took from its mawther, all’y’s wantin’ the owld warmth agen.”

At which Ellen’s eyes would twinkle strangely as she hastily turned away her head.

By-and-by the mother began to dimly apprehend that something was not as it ought to be—that some hunger or want in Ellen’s heart was either repressed or unsatisfied, and the girl felt a shadow on her thoughts.

Was her husband neglectful or unkind ? Neither, so far as Ellen would confess. He was just an average husband in all things—masterful in most of his

moods ; expecting his own way naturally, without his even having the trouble to define what it was that he wished ; and touched with a certain slime of coarseness which showed itself in numberless ways.

But Ellen was used to this masterfulness ; it was natural to all the men she knew, and she felt no more annoyance at its appearance in her husband than she did at his deep bass voice or his beard. And even Sam's congenital coarseness was something she condoned or overlooked.

The vague dissatisfaction she experienced—the sense of disenchantment with her choice—was due, in fact, to feelings so subtle that she shrank from even putting them into words.

She had expected Sam's love after marriage would have been emphasised as well as prolonged—a sunny continuation of their courting, but with touches which they hitherto had missed. Whereas Sam, secure in his position, and at no time fluent of speech or even extravagantly in love, settled down to his marital perquisites in the most matter-of-fact way in the world, and would as soon have thought of giving up fishing as of searching after sentimental talk.

This, however, Ellen never spoke of—scarcely understanding it, in fact. So that the mother, in the background, drawing conclusions of her own, put down to Sam's actual unkindness what was merely due to girlish unrest. For the crude combination of motives upon which Ellen's marriage was based included more of sentiment than of passion, and less perhaps, of either than of something which was strangely like self-will or vanity, or, it might be, a mixture of both.

Ellen had married Sam not because she was in love with him—she liked him in a mild, undemonstrative way—but because in her life at the moment there was no other motive or solicitation more suggestively uppermost in thought. And to be married was a girlish ambition which everyone wished to attain.

But now that the fatal knot was fastened, and the marriage, which had once been a daydream, had become a mere commonplace of life, Ellen fancied the world had changed its aspect, and kept fretfully questioning why.

At first Ellen found it rather difficult to learn the duties of a fisherman's wife, and even more difficult (so she said) to perform them to the satisfaction of her neighbours, as well as to the satisfaction of Sam. But here her pride came to the rescue, and she made up her mind to succeed.

The rather grimy labour in the cellars connected with the curing of the fish Ellen mastered with but little seeming effort, and was soon an adept at the work. But the weaving and repairing of nets she found far more difficult to learn, and even the knitting of guernseys became at times a burdensome task. Still having married a fisherman and settled down among a fishing population, where the successful performance of such duties was considered the criterion of worth, Ellen could not afford to be beaten in a matter she had so much at heart; so she resolutely buckled to her duties, and attained a fair measure of success. She was always, however, rather awkward in the making or mending of nets, and never won much praise as a knitter, though she strove for it honestly enough. But as Sam pronounced her work

to be "passable," Ellen kept her wounded feelings to herself.

Trivial though the details may seem, it was around trivialities like these that the first little jars of married life occasionally reddened Ellen's eyes. For the young wife would shed tears in secret when this or that matter went wrong, though she would not for the world have shown such weakness either before her neighbours or Sam.

I am afraid that just about this time Ellen got the idea in her head that Sam was in many ways discontented, and repented his bargain, so to speak.

There was a pretty little blonde in the village—one Maggie Trenwith by name—whom Sam had at one time been sweet on in the unsettled days of his youth; and as Maggie as a knitter was unrivalled within at least a mile of the cliff, and was reckoned among the cleverest net-menders of whom the village could boast, Ellen often heard the praise of her rival when her own shortcomings were discussed, and felt towards the pleasant little lassie a bitterness that almost grew to hate.

Maggie, however (to do her justice), now that Sam had settled down with a wife, treated him like any other neighbour, joking and laughing when they met, and seemed either to forget or ignore that they once had drifted closer together, and had almost, in fact, "made a match."

But Ellen, with her daydreams unrealised, was altogether too sore at heart to discriminate in matters so delicate, and did right to be jealous, she thought.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW IT BEGAN.

"If ye take heed, it is no need
Such words to say to me."

THERE was always considerable excitement in the village when the boats came in in the morning with the last night's catch on board. However early they might put in an appearance—which, of course, was dependent on the state of the tide—not only were the fish jowsters (or hawkers) on the spot, but usually a score or so of the fishermen's wives would be found jabbering noisily together either on the cliff or the quay.

From the top of the cliff it was always possible to shout down inquiries to those on board the boats, and many of the wives who, though lazy, were anxious to know the state of the catch, would simply hang over the railings and bawl out their questions from there. But Ellen, though she lived on the cliff-top, could never quite make up her mind to stand shouting down at her husband among the women who, in picturesque undress, leaned across the stout iron rails.

So each morning Sam had the pleasure of finding his wife watching on the pier as his boat sidled in to her berth. And, what was more, unlike the others—or, at least, unlike most of the wives—Ellen was never slovenly in appearance, but was always

as neat as a pin. Therefore Sam felt both flattered and proud when he perceived her bonny face peering over the heads of the others—as Ellen was exceptionally tall—and heard her voice calling to him cheerfully :

“ Well, Sam, an’ what luck to-night ? ”

Ellen had, however, a shadow on her enjoyment owing to the presence of Maggie, who often came down in the mornings, though without any reason, Ellen thought. But Maggie, though her father was a shopkeeper, had uncles and cousins in the fleet, and was drawn towards the boats and the fishermen by a magnetism nothing could resist. They seemed to carry with them, for the girl’s imagination, the aroma of the vast salt wastes they traversed, and the mystery of that barren, unsearchable ocean which was always before her in the shop where she lived, and was half the time sounding its cry in her ears as she went about her work or looked out from the cliff. The sea-gulls that were constantly wheeling about the harbour could arouse in her something of the same sense of mystery, the same sense of longing after things out of reach ; but the fishermen cleaved to her thoughts still more closely. To be a fisherman’s wife would be bliss, Maggie thought.

This, however, Ellen, in her jealousy, entirely failed to understand, and tried to believe that her rival merely came to the quay to see Sam.

A lively little chatterbox was Maggie, always making friends for herself, and as different as possible from Ellen, who, though sociable, was somewhat reserved. So that while they were waiting for the boats Maggie would be flitting to and fro, “ on the gad ” all the time, as they say ; while Ellen,

though neighbourly when spoken to, would be half the time leaning across the sea-wall, watching the light on the waves.

One fine morning in September, waking early according to her wont, Ellen glanced through the bedroom-window to note the position of the fleet—which had anchored on the previous evening midway out in the bay—and found the boats had started from the fishing-grounds and were now creeping slowly towards the shore.

The shadow of night was melting tardily from the undulating waters of the bay, but the wide semicircle of hills was still almost hidden in the gloom, though the Mount was beginning to be individualised in a spectral and unsubstantial way.

Down below, in the dusk of the harbour, a few gulls were piping among the stones, and two or three home-keeping sparrows were chirping among the chimneys close by; and Ellen threw open the window and breathed the fresh air with delight.

She could see, by their distance from the shore, that the boats could not reach the little harbour for quite another hour, if so soon; so she dressed herself and set about her duties, singing scraps of old songs as she worked.

While she was sweeping up and dusting, the twilight melted gradually into day, and by the time the fire was lighted and the kettle was planted on the hob, the ineffable splendours of sunrise were flashing across the blue breadths of sea.

So superb was the golden effulgence that lighted up half the wide sky, that Ellen went out to the cliff-top and leaned across the rail to watch the sight.

The huge accumulations of cloud, which at dawn

had almost blotted out the sky, were now being rapidly broken up, and while drifting away out of sight were splashed across with splendours so prismatic—so gorgeous and vivid of hue—that Ellen felt a ripple of wonder widening out through her thoughts as she gazed.

The grey slope of houses at Penzance, and the fainter patch that stood for Marazion, were distinguishable at last near the shore, and the turrets and towers of St. Michael were as sharp and distinct as if etched; but the long, narrow line of the Lizard could barely be discerned against the sky. And meanwhile the sea, though still glassy, was beginning to dimple and stir.

Three or four fishwives, with their cowels on their backs, were by this time visible on the slip near the cliff; and a few jowsters, in their tumble-down vehicles—which were little more than poles on a couple of wheels—were whipping their lean steeds onwards towards the harbour with a plentiful supply of gestures and words.

The boats, in a long and straggling column, extended for quite a couple of miles, and already the foremost was nearing the harbour, while the last in the fleet was off the Bucks; so Ellen went indoors to put on her hat, and then sauntered leisurely down to the quay.

As the first boat was drawing near the sea-wall, the folks began to shout from the shore.

“What sort o’ catch have ’ee had, you?” bawled the women, making trumpets of their hands.

“Splendid!” came the response.

And the hum of talk on the sea-wall forthwith started afresh.

In a little while the boat had entered the harbour and quietly taken up her berth beside the pier, and almost immediately after they began to land the fish.

By this time other boats were close at hand, and were duly being hailed by the folks on the pier, till the air was alive with the buzzing and shouting and the rail on the cliff-top was crowded with forms.

The *Kittiwake*, which Sam had a share in, was still, however, some distance out; so Ellen, leaning over the sea-wall, set herself to watch its progress towards the shore, and, if possible, to identify her husband, who was sure to be somewhere on deck.

No sooner did she recognise Sam, than she waved her hand to welcome him home; but Sam, instead of answering her signal, deliberately turned away his head.

Naturally Ellen was annoyed, but she kept her irritation to herself, and still remained watching the *Kittiwake* as the latter glided leisurely on.

By this time the harbour was rather overcrowded, and the later arrivals from the fleet had to make for the broad sandy shore, on which they were safely beached. And Sam's boat, through being such a laggard, had to take her chance there with the rest.

Ellen accordingly left the quay, and, mounting again to the cliff-top, proceeded down the slip to the beach, and was just in time to see the little *Kittiwake* thrusting her nose in the sand.

A broad belt of rather shallow water extended between the boat and the shore, and Ellen, at the edge of the ripples, watched the crew of the *Kittiwake* from there.

Presently the jowsters began to bawl out questions to the men who were gathered rather sullenly on deck.

"Poor luck, you!" cried the captain. "We've lost more'n half of our catch."

Yet none the less the jowsters drove their rickety vehicles through the shallow water till they stood beside the boat, and, standing up on the shafts, against which the water rippled and swished, they began to clamour to the captain, trying to bargain for the catch.

Meanwhile Ellen remained at the edge of the water watching her husband, but making no sign.

At last she heard the captain remark rather roughly to the jowster who had ultimately purchased the catch—which was too small to sell to an ordinary "buyer":

"We shudn' ha' ben in this here hole ef it hadn' ben for Sam Trewartha. 'Twar his nit lost us th' catch. Gov' 'way when th' fish was in un, an' left 'em go weth a rush!"

"Poor job that!" quoth the jowster. "Owld wan was 'a?"

"No. 'Twarn't so much owld age done it. Slovenly mendin'."

"Aw."

And Ellen, who had done the mending, felt the hot blood rush to her face, till it seemed as though everything she was gazing at was suffused with a blood-red stain.

Soon the fishermen in their tall sea-boots, began to wade ashore through the ebbing tide, and among the others came Sam Trewartha, with his bearded face looking strangely glum.

"Wha's this about th' nit, Sam?" asked Ellen, as her husband approached.

Sam burst out wrathfully at once:

"It's thy darned carelessness done it. Nice fools thee've made of us both!"

And just then, as ill-luck would have it, Maggie came sauntering by and overheard the ill-tempered speech.

"Mornin', Sam," quoth Maggie.

"Mornin', Maggie," quoth Sam.

"What sort o' luck have 'ee had, Sam?"

"Poor luck, you," Sam grunted. "Lost more'n haaf th' catch."

"How was that?" asked Maggie; while Ellen, with her hot cheeks tingling with vexation, stood by angrily biting her lips.

"Mus'n' spayke o' that, s'pose, here," quoth Sam, with a glance at his wife.

"Why not?" Maggie asked innocently.

"S'pose thee've heerd of it, too?"

"No—not a word," quoth Maggie.

"Nit gov' 'way. Bad mendin'."

"Oh!" was Maggie's response.

Ellen, who was fidgeting restlessly, now began to move on.

"Are 'ee comin' home to breakfast this mornin'?" she asked in an irritated tone.

"Mornin', Maggie," said Sam, as he followed his wife across the beach.

But Maggie, as she stood still to watch them, noticed that though they went off together, they exchanged not a word on the way.

The beach was alive with buyers and sellers—fishwives with their cowels and jowsters with their

carts, tall-booted fishermen tramping through the shallows, and black-eyed maidens giggling at the fun—and was strewn in places with discarded dog-fish, heaps of hake and repulsive conger, and here and there a gigantic ray. Across the sands wheeled scores of seagulls attracted by the scent and the offal exposed, while the clatter of tongues was almost phenomenal, and the whole air seemed to be throbbing with sound. But Sam and Ellen plodded grimly homeward without so much as a smile or a word.

Of course, they had occasionally to respond to a greeting, or even to laugh out a greeting themselves, but as between each other the silence was unbroken, and Ellen felt her heart uncomfortably swell.

Nor was this sense of undeserved unhappiness lessened by the sparkle and vivacity of the scene through which she took her way with thoughts so depressed. The shimmer of the waves across the wet yellow sands, the deepening blue of the waters beyond, the wide dome above with its diaphanous cloudlets, and the black mural cliff with the houses on its crest, formed a scene which under ordinary circumstances would have caused her the keenest delight. But at present its life and attractiveness only added to her deepening unrest, till she felt that she hated the sunshine and the happy faces freshened by its light.

Ellen was continually fancying that every one she happened to meet must be noticing and talking of the sulkiness displayed between Sam and herself, and a mist of self-pity and irritation at times gathered over her eyes. For we most of us believe that our neighbours are analysing us and our moods, until

we discover, in the end, that our friends, instead of being absorbed in the perplexities which *our* lives present, are engaged, with a quite absorbing eagerness, in endeavouring to solve the riddle of their own. But to this bit of quieting knowledge Ellen had not as yet found the clue, or else the humiliation of the morning would have missed more than half of its sting.

CHAPTER V.

RIGHTS AND WRONGS.

By the time they arrived at their cottage Ellen and Sam were so irritated that Ellen longed to "unpack her heart" in any angry way that would serve; while Sam, instead of merely keeping silent, felt a grim desire to punish her with his fists.

But in both the vague sentiment in the background—the pressure and authority of opinions that were outside and greater than themselves—so mastered the mere twinge of instinct, that neither dared to follow up the thought.

So, while Ellen threw her hat on a chair and began to lay the table for breakfast, Sam slouched sullenly away, in order to change his things and get a wash.

Although Sam had once or twice previously shown symptoms of sulking when annoyed, he had never, in any other tiff, so deliberately refused to speak a word; and Ellen, unused to the situation, began to grow just a little anxious at what his ill-temper might portend.

Through the cottage door, which opened on the street, Ellen, while laying the breakfast, could hear the constant clatter of feet and the chattering of the men and their wives as they discussed together the catches of the morning, and an ever-increasing bitterness against her husband began now to tinge all her thoughts.

What had she done that the sunshine should fall upon all except herself? If the net had given way, could she help it? She had done her best with it at the time, and if her best was thwarted by circumstances, in what way was *she* to be blamed?

The trivial vexation of the moment she could argue with strenuously enough, but the issues involved in the matter she was by no means so competent to grasp. The problem of woman's position—and especially the position of a wife—she had never once troubled to consider, leaving all such large questions to chance. And now that it demanded her attention with an urgency nothing could appease, she was practically as helpless before it as if she were still but a child. Like most of the women of her class, Ellen trusted to instinct, with its shifty ways of settling things and its tendency to make matters pleasant for self, rather than to reason, with its cumbersome machinery and its aptitude for making self dwindle in the scale. And already instinct urged her to outwardly temporise, while holding all her claims and pretensions intact.

She would give way to Sam in this instance, though believing he was decidedly in the wrong—was, in fact, as ungenerous towards her as if actuated solely by spite. But though she gave way to his humour, she would neither forgive nor forget it. He should find out she was not a child to be slapped and then petted into smiles. And in this mood she laid out the breakfast, defiantly humming to herself as if to show how little she cared for him and how lightly he weighed in her thoughts.

Presently Sam—having tidied himself—came back, glouting still.

"Well, got ovver thy temper?" quoth Ellen, as he seated himself.

"Gi's me brekfus'," will 'ee?" snarled Sam, with a tug at his beard.

Ellen put his breakfast before him, and then sat down to her own.

"Lost thy tongue this morning?" asked Ellen, after a pause.

"Thee han't lost thine," he mumbled. "Pity 'tes hung so loose."

"Wha's th' good o' being so taisy?" quoth Ellen, in a tone of appeal.

"We caan't all act like cheldern. Some of us got to ha' sense."

"When are 'ee goin' to git yours 'en?" The sarcasm came like a flash.

Sam spluttered out an angry oath as he half choked over a bone.

"Thee'rt makin' as much fuss about a' accident as some men would about a crime."

She was evidently testing her courage, though she trembled in every nerve. But Sam, in his sour ill-temper, missed the clue to her mood.

"Ef thee knaw'd a fool o' that sort, thee ought to ha' tried for he."

"I never tried for thee," cried Ellen, with the hot blood flushing her face.

Sam laughed in a sneering manner. "S'pose not. Tha's why thee'rt here."

"You dedn' say that in your coortin' days. You was hot enough then to ha' me here."

"S'pose I was jus' like th' rest of 'em; dedn' knaw what was good for meself."

"So you're sorry you marr-ried me, s'pose?"

"What ef I am?" Sam grunted: "I must make th' best of it now."

"S'pose you wish you'd marr-ried Maggie Tren-with?"

"Might ha' done wuss than that."

"Well, anyhow, now you *caan't* have her!" Ellen burst out, trembling with wrath. "I'll live ef it's onnly to spite 'ee!" she added, as she rose from her chair.

Sam growled out a fierce imprecation, and Ellen flounced out of the room, and made her way up to her bedroom, where she burst out crying at once.

Meanwhile, Sam, having finished his breakfast, put on his hat and strolled out.

As Ellen heard Sam leave the house with his heavy, deliberate tread, she instinctively checked her weeping and went to the window to watch.

Sam, however, merely slouched out to the cliff-top, where a knot of fishermen were lounging against the rail, and, taking his place among them, soon edged into the talk, whose lazy, aimless drift exactly suited his mood.

As she watched his attitude of loafing ease, Ellen began to be a little ashamed at showing so much feeling about a quarrel which to Sam seemed so trivial, she thought; and she made up her mind, there and then, that in future she would try to treat their differences in the same undemonstrative way.

She evidently felt her want of knowledge as to how best to manage her life, but instead of grappling strenuously with the problem, and endeavouring to think out its bearings and the wisest solution that would work, she set herself to copy another who was every whit as ignorant as herself.

But, unhappily, her personal solution of the problem was evidently bound to react upon the mind whose fluctuating moods and attitudes she was imitating, so that chaos was likely to be her model after all.

Still, having come to the decision to model her behaviour on her husband's, Ellen washed away the traces of her tears and went downstairs to her work.

Midway in the morning, when Sam had left the cliff-top and was down on the beach attending to the boat, Ellen, looking up from her cooking, saw her sister coming up to the door.

Phyllis had a small market-basket on her arm, and was beaming all over her face as she approached, and Ellen, infected by her cheerfulness, smiled a wan smile in return.

"Wha's made 'ee so merry?" asked Ellen.

"That ridiculous Mr. Hoskin!" giggled Phyllis, as she seated herself in a chair, and again began to laugh at some memory that appeared to bubble up in her mind.

"Seed un up in town, ded 'ee?"

"Iss."

"Sim to me, thee an' Mr. Hoskin meet putty often up in town."

"Well, we arn't afraid of ayeche awther; ef tha's any news to 'ee, Nell."

"No; I should say not!" quoth Ellen, with a sly smile playing around her mouth.

A wonderfully arch expression flitted over Phyllis's face as she glanced up saucily at Ellen and then gave an enigmatic nod.

"S'pose you'll soon be walkin' out weth un?"

"Would 'ee faint ef thee mit us, do 'ee think?"

"S'pose I'll have to stand it when it happens."

Whereat Phyllis giggled and blushed.

"Will 'a turn out all right, do 'ee think?"

"I b'lieve so I faancy so," quoth Phyllis, tying knots in her apron as she spoke.

"Well, I hope so, I'm sure," replied Ellen. "But I'd like to see more of un fust. Do 'ee think I must keep a' eye on un I s'pose thee cud'n manage to bring un here?"

"Iss; he'd come fast enough," said Phyllis, "ef I onnly cared to give un th' chaance."

"Well . . . an' why not?" rejoined Ellen.

Phyllis played with her apron and blushed.

"Ef I could see 'ee together I'd soon manage that," Ellen said.

"Well, then . . . next Sunday, after chapel."

"Right! I'll look out for 'ee, then. By the way, come to think of it," said Ellen, "there'll be praichin' on th' cliff in th' evenin'. Better come there instead o' goin' to chapel; I'll bring 'ee out a couple o' cheers."

"Iss; that 'ud suit me," said Phyllis, "and ef I can manage it I will."

"Very well, I shall 'spect 'ee," quoth Ellen; and there the matter ended for the time.

Presently Phyllis noticed that her sister seemed all of a twitter this morning; was as nervous as a cat, as they say. So, after watching Ellen for a little while, she asked her, "Have anything gone wrong with 'ee? Have 'ee had a quarrel with Sam?"

"No-o-o; we haven' quarrelled," answered Ellen, in a tone which made her sister "have her doubts."

Phyllis peered up over her teacup with a suspicious glance in her eyes. "Thee'rt lookin' as though some-thin's th' matter. Esn'a kind to 'ee, Nell?"

On which Ellen burst out angrily, "Ugh! he's a sulky pig! I never seed no wan like un—sulk, sulk, all day long!"

"What have 'a ben doin' to 'ee, Nelly?"

Then Ellen "out with" her tale.

During Ellen's angry narration, which she once or twice accented with her tears, Phyllis took her sister's part so strongly that Ellen began to soften her words. Feeling just a little ashamed at being pitied by an unmarried sister, on the score of having blundered in her marriage and getting on badly with her man, she set herself to minimise the effect of her angry attack upon Sam, but only succeeded in making Phyllis think the quarrel even worse than it was.

"Well, you bear it more patient than I should," said Phyllis, by way of comfort, in the end. "Ef I had a husband who trayted me so unkindly, I wedn' live weth un not anawther day!"

"How could 'ee help yourself?" quoth Ellen, who evidently believed in the proverb, "The goat must browse where she is tied."

"You could come home, o' coorse, ef you cared to."

"I would never do that!" Ellen said. Confess, in the face of the world, to a failure so lamentable as this? Ellen felt she would never have the courage to make such a fool of herself; for in this way she summed up the matter when turning it over in her mind.

"Then what do 'ee mayne to do?" asked Phyllis.

"Why, nawthin'. Put up weth it, s'pose."

"I thought you'd got more sperrit, Ellen!"

"You wait 'tel you're marr-ried," said her sister;

"I 'spect you'll tell a deffernt tale then."

"I'm sure I shaan't!" Phyllis said shortly.

"We shall see," Mother Wisdom remarked.

Presently Phyllis put her hat on. "Well, Nelly, keep up your sperrits; I'll see 'ee again on Sunday," she said.

"I shall 'spect 'ee both. Doan't 'ee disappoint me."

"I'll try not to," Phyllis replied.

"Thank mawther for the eggs an' th' butter—and, mind, not a word of what I've towld 'ee!"

"All right!" answered Phyllis; "good-bye!"

CHAPTER VI.

A BAD JACK MAKES A BAD JILL.

FOR several days Ellen and Sam were jarring; but on Friday they seemed to have "made it up" again, though each of them *secretly* felt a little sore at the rather unexpected prolongation of their tiff.

On Saturday, as the wind was blowing somewhat "fresh," the majority of the fishing-boats made for Penzance, in order to be sheltered in the harbour in case it should "come on to blow"; and as Sam, before leaving in the morning, had arranged that on returning from Penzance he would take Ellen in there to market, Ellen worked hard to get her *churs* done against the time her husband would be back.

It was a breezy September morning, with a constant drift of clouds across the sky, and a picturesque "lop" in the water, where a few of the waves would occasionally don their white caps as they danced. The boats scattered over the bay, between Newlyn and the harbour of Penzance, gave a new animation to the scene as they worked their way, with many a plunge, towards the sheltering piers of St. John, while the deep *whoo-aa-wash* of the breakers could be heard in all the crooked little streets, and even on the hilltops above. And Ellen, as she dusted or scrubbed or moved in and out about her *churs*, felt the sound of the wind and the breakers give a zest of its own to her moods, till she seemed like an un-

married girl, such a strange yearning woke in her thoughts.

In an hour or two, glancing through the doorway, Ellen saw that the boats were out of sight—having rounded the long reef of rocks that from here hid the harbour of Penzance—and a little while after began the picturesque home-coming: the men straggling into the village in a constant stream of disconnected groups that were scattered along the road near the sea-front for almost a couple of miles.

It was always a pleasant event, this arrival of the men on the Saturday when the week's work was happily over, and the sweethearts and children and wives could be thought of instead of the boats; and the village, while the home-coming lasted, might be said to bubble over with life.

Presently Sam slouched up in his grimy working suit, and by the time his face and hands were washed, Ellen had the dinner on the table, and they both sat down to the meal.

Very proud indeed Ellen was when they by-and-by started for Penzance, Sam in his blue double-breaster with its broad black velvet collar, and with a peaked cloth cap on his head, and she in her smart brown dress, with a natty little pair of shoes, and with her big white leghorn hat drooping jauntily over her curls.

And Sam felt proud of his pretty young wife—who looked so smart, and carried herself so lady-like—and also felt a sense of jovial satisfaction at the creditable figure he presented at her side. And in this mood of shallow though humorous vanity—smiling at their neighbours and smiling to themselves—the husband and wife walked leisurely

through the village and took their way to the town of Penzance.

The wind was freshening across the waters of the bay; the plunging waves foamed whitely on the beach, and the long black reefs, like that of Lariggan, were ringed with a bubbling mass of surf.

As acquaintances met and passed on the road, the talk was as often of the sea and the weather as of marketing gossip and the prices of goods, till the conversation, as well as the atmosphere, seemed to have in it a flavour of spray. And Sam, in whom the vague attraction towards the sea—the mysterious impulse and tyranny of associations—made the smell and the stir of the great salt wastes as pleasant and healthy to him as its mother's milk is to a babe, felt so freshened by the walk along the sea-front, with the light spray blowing in his face, that his rollicking bursts of merriment often annoyed his wife, for whose fetich of “decent behaviour” Sam felt little respect.

“Do ’ee keep quiet, Sam!” quoth his wife rather pettishly at last. “Wan would think thee wert reared on a four-barrow moor; * thee’rt grizzlin’ like a badger all the time.”

At which Sam riotously burst out again, laughing now with all his lungs.

“I’m ’most ashamed to walk along weth ’ee. Do ’ee control theeself!”

“Nonsense! who do it harm? We caan’t all be like thee. Thee’rt like Malachi’s cheeld, chock-full o’ sense!” cried Sam, with another hearty guffaw.

Ellen bridled up in an instant, with a toss of her long black curls and a pursing up of the lips, and

* A colloquial euphemism for “a desolate place.”

then walked on in silence, with Sam as glum at her side.

It was what is called the townspeople's market in Penzance, as the country folks bring in their produce on the Thursday, and on that day make their purchases for the week. And though the little town was not seen at its liveliest—as the Thursday's market is the busiest of the two—there was still enough life in the streets and market-place to make the air full of a buzzing unrest, which to Ellen and her husband was decidedly agreeable, and kept up a pleasant titillation in their thoughts.

What with purchases to make and acquaintances to gossip with, Ellen found the time fly rapidly enough; but Sam, who had to wait outside the shops while his wife was busy bartering within, began to feel it rather wearisome to be kicking his heels against the flags, and at last told Ellen he would stroll towards the harbour and would meet her near the church at the bottom of Chapel Street about the time she would be ready to go home. And Ellen, who was pleasantly engrossed in her marketing, dismissed him with a smile to do as he proposed.

The harbour had unlimited attractions for Sam—notwithstanding that the tide was now on the ebb—and he leaned against a mooring-post with his hands in his pockets, watching the scene with complete content. For, strangely enough, the chiefest happiness of the couple seemed to come not from their being together, but simply from the pleasure they derived from pursuits that happened to be congenial or agreeable to them, and Sam on the quay and Ellen at her shopping felt as satisfied as though the world centred in themselves.

While his wife was busied with her marketing, gradually filling the basket, which had now grown heavy on her arm, Sam lounged about in the harbour quietly smoking his pipe till he thought it was time to seek for Ellen, who by now should be ready to go home.

Leisurely sauntering up Quay Street, he soon reached the spot near the church, and leaning against the wall of the churchyard, prepared to wait till Ellen should appear.

Several acquaintances passed him while he stood there, and Sam had a few words of gossip with them all.

Presently who should come by but Maggie, with her market-basket hanging on her arm.

"Heavy-loaden, Maggie?" said Sam.

"'Bout as much as I care for," said Maggie, setting down her basket on the kerb.

"Fresh."

"But pleasant for walkin'."

"It'll be windy, though, on the Green"—by which name the walk along the sea-front was spoken of, although it had long been paved and embanked.

"Well, I don't much mind it," said Maggie. "I like th' salt in the air."

"Golly! so do I!" said Sam. "Doan't it freshen 'ee fine?"

The sudden light in his eyes seemed to be reflected in hers, as she glanced up keenly at him and then looked down and blushed.

Sam felt through his big, gross frame a strange little tremor and thrill, and began to fidget uneasily, much like a nervous girl. The memories of his walks with Maggie seemed to suddenly waken in

his thoughts, and the kisses he had stolen, or paid for, made his face unaccountably hot. The sensuous fibre within him was by no means slumbering now, and he looked down curiously at Maggie with a quite peculiar glance.

But at this moment, rather unexpectedly, Ellen appeared on the scene.

Ever since Ellen had learned—after her marriage—how Maggie and Sam had once “run around” together, Ellen had felt a shrinking repugnance, a kind of jealous spite, towards the girl.

Not only was Maggie rather younger than Ellen, but she had also the indefinable piquancy of one who as yet was uncaptured by a man; so that, merely as a matter of rivalry, she was not altogether to be despised. And Ellen felt as sour-natured towards her as if, instead of Maggie being jilted, she herself had been cast off by Sam, and owed the girl a bitter grudge for that.

Consequently, the meeting of the rivals—for such they might really be called—was a time of closed lips and frigidity, and of eyes that looked glumly askance.

“Good-evenin’ to ’ee, Sam,” said Maggie, as she took up her basket again. “A pleasant walk home,” she added smilingly.

“I’ve had some as pleasant, I ’spect,” rejoined Sam, catching something of her tone.

Ellen glanced from one to the other, and then turned to Sam with a frown.

“P’raps you’ll help me weth th’ basket—when you’ve finished. I’ve ben lugging it about now for hours.”

Sam took the basket from her without any remark,

and, while Maggie walked on briskly ahead, the husband and wife followed after, full of all kinds of fault-finding thoughts.

At last Ellen burst out abruptly :

“ Ben havin’ a fine time, s’pose ? ”

“ Well, I caan’t say I haven’ enjoyed meself,” answered Sam, after thinking it out.

At which Ellen sniffed and pouted and pretended not to follow his eyes, which were evidently dwelling on Maggie, who was striding on bravely in front.

They had by this time passed through Wherrytown and got beyond the shelter of its “ street,” and were now on the unprotected sea-front, with the wind blowing full in their teeth. They accordingly deferred discussion for the present, and hurried on as rapidly as possible across the wind-beaten, sand-swept causeway, holding fast their head-gear the while.

The couple managed to progress satisfactorily, notwithstanding Ellen’s alarm about her hat ; but Maggie who happened to be considerably overweighted, found it difficult to attend to her basket and her head-gear, and at the same time keep down her mantle and dress, and at last, in a really desperate attempt to attend to all of them at the self-same instant, she suddenly felt her hat lifted off her head, and away it whirled across the neighbouring fields.

Maggie gave a scream as though Tregeagle had got her ; up flew her dress half over her ears ; in her sudden dismay she dropped her basket, and out flew the parcels all across the road.

“ Howld on to this, will ’ee, Ellen ? An’ help her

pick up th' things?" And Sam, handing Ellen the basket, darted off after the hat.

It was a chase to capture the truant—which seemed to have a piskie in its crown—but at last Sam managed to clutch it, and panted back with his prize.

He found Ellen standing by her basket exactly where he happened to set it down, and Maggie engaged in picking up her parcels, with her hair blown down over her back.

"Here's thy hat, Maggie," panted Sam. "I had a run for un, no mistake!"

"I'll do as much for you wan day," replied Maggie, with a blush and a smile.

And then, as Sam stooped to assist her in picking up the parcels from the ground, Maggie gave him a comical look and told him to go and help his wife.

"I'd raather help *thee* ef thee'll le' me."

Maggie looked up and violently coloured.

"I think I've got them all now," said she.

"Shall I howld th' basket while thee put thy heer straight!"

"No, thank 'ee, Sam," replied Maggie; "but I'm much obliged to 'ee all the same."

"I'd do more than that to plaise 'ee, Maggie."

But Maggie was busied with her hair and let him return to his wife.

"So thee 've finished weth that bold hussy, hav' 'ee? S'pose now thee can 'tend to thy wife?"

"Come! gi's th' basket! Le's be movin'!"

And he took it up, and homeward they went.

Ellen, however, slackened her steps in order not to get abreast of Maggie, who was only a few yards

in front, and in this way they entered the village just as the dusk began to fall.

But no sooner were they safe in the house than Ellen commenced to pour out her grievances, even before taking off her hat.

"I shall go me awn way," said her husband, "an' thee can go thine ef thee wust."

CHAPTER VII.

THE PREACHING ON THE CLIFF.

It was a picturesque scene Ellen witnessed next day when the open-air service was held on the cliff.

The heavy wind of the preceding evening—which finally at midnight had risen to a gale—had left the air pleasantly cool and fresh, and now, in the quiet decline of day, when the sun was westering in unclouded splendour and the sea was almost as smooth as glass, the pervading feeling—as of exquisite restfulness—seemed to make itself felt in the little congregation as well as in the grander constituents of the scene.

The spot where the service was being held had been, as it were, consecrated by the presence of Wesley, who had more than once preached there on his visits to the peninsula, and the cherished memories of “the old man eloquent,” who had so vitally revolutionised the morals of the West, had been handed down through three generations with something akin to superstitious regard, so that the traditional associations of the scene were added, in the minds of many who were present, to the other vague influences that were acting on their thoughts, and prepared them to feel a certain hallowing suggestiveness in the slightest words uttered in so sacred a spot.

But others—and these were undoubtedly the

majority—looked on open-air preaching as something of a fête; and being cut adrift from the symbols and associations that pertained to the chapel with its specialised air, they felt themselves free to treat their novel surroundings as relaxing those restraints upon their intercourse which the meeting-house grimly enforced. And Phyllis and 'Siah seemed naturally to gravitate towards this mood to-night.

The preacher was a rough-hewn, grizzled old stonemason, with a halting speech but an impulsive heart; and though no one smiled at his shambling oratory and the confusion of metaphors in which he indulged, there was in many an agreeable sense of superiority which made them feel wonderfully satisfied with themselves; so that the audience, though at no time moved deeply, was throughout well conducted according to its lights.

Ellen, who was greatly interested in the meeting, had brought out chairs for Phyllis and 'Siah, and would have brought out two for Sam and herself, but Sam preferred to stand among the group of men who were lounging against the rail not far from the preacher, and Ellen, not liking to appear there without him, tried to look as though she felt thoroughly contented with watching the scene from the door of her house. But, unhappily, Maggie formed one of the congregation—showing up smartly in her big new hat—and Ellen felt the subtle irritation of Maggie's presence constantly tingling and pricking in her thoughts.

Meanwhile, Phyllis and 'Siah were enjoying themselves in their own rather frivolous fashion, as Ellen could perceive from the door.

Ever since the wedding-supper 'Siah had been making up to Phyllis in every way his fancy could suggest, and was so much exhilarated by the chase that he was always in a state of effervescence, and kept Phyllis bubbling with fun.

Evidently his idea of an acceptable suitor was that of one who fed up his sweetheart with flatteries and appetising knick-knacks, and endured with good-humoured forbearance whatever her caprice might inflict.

And endeavouring to live up to this ideal, 'Siah buckled-to his wooing like a man.

It was rather incongruous, it was true, to hear the folks lustily singing—

“ Lord, I hear of showers of blessing,
Thou art scattering full and free ;
Showers the thirsty land refreshing :
Let some droppings fall on me,”

and to find 'Siah grinning at Phyllis as he passed her a peppermint-drop. But the lovers, unaware of the incongruity, were as happy as a couple of children with a farthing to spend “going to school,” and made eyes at each other in a fashion which to Ellen seemed choicely absurd.

Indeed, throughout the whole of the service their behaviour was more suited to a school-treat than to such an occasion as this ; and Maggie was so scandalised at it that she had to nudge a neighbour to look.

Now, 'Siah (as he thought, artfully, and, of course, unobserved by the world) would gently tread on Phyllis's foot ; and *then*, after carefully fishing for, would capture and squeeze her soft hand ; and when

the zest of squeezing was over, out again would come his packet of sweets! After which came more nudging and squeezing, with glances from the corners of their eyes, and a grin or a half-stifled giggle, and in this way they fled the time.

Presently 'Siah drew out of his pocket what seemed to be a brown square of gingerbread; and, after considerable shuffling, he slid it into the hand of his sweetheart, who stealthily conveyed it to her mouth. Unhappily, while Phyllis was munching it, 'Siah, forgetful of the fact, chanced to give her a playful little nudge; whereupon a sudden fit of coughing almost choked her and frightened them both.

After this the lovers kept quieter—very much to Ellen's relief—and contented themselves with now and then giggling or passing a peppermint-drop.

While Ellen was thus divided in her interests—at one time engaged in watching 'Siah and her sister, at another time looking after Maggie and Sam—there was going on in front of her another little comedy of which at the moment she failed to take note.

Sam's sister Lizzie, though barely seventeen, was a tall and presentable girl for her age, and coming about midway in a rather large family, had developed in the usual rapid fashion which obtains in an overstocked house. She had been running about for years with the boys, and knew enough sweethearting nonsense to keep her pulse always astir. Ever since the marriage of her brother she had kept an eye on Phyllis and 'Siah, and was envious enough of the former to have scratched her face if that would spoil her fun. Of late, however, within the last week or

two, Lizzie had got a boy of her own, who she hoped would prove a permanent sweetheart and not a mere makeshift for a week ; and with this hope the sparkling-eyed hoyden endeavoured to catch the fancy of her companion in the way that best suited his taste, and allowed him to carry his wooing to the full length which wisdom would permit. Accordingly to the open-air service—as to something that was piquant in itself and allowed them more freedom than the chapel—came Lizzie and her latest male admirer: the red-headed youngster called George.

But George was of a different stamp to 'Siah—given more to snatching kisses than doling out sweets—and instead of wasting time passing peppermints and gingerbread, he preferred to have his arm around his sweetheart, and through this medium emphasise his love. And Lizzie, in her own healthy fashion, seemed to highly approve of his plan.

Sam, from his place beside the railing, could see little of 'Siah and Phyllis, and less of his sister and George; so that during the whole of the service, which was not inordinately long, his attention was divided between Maggie and Ellen—his sweetheart that had been, and his wedded wife that was.

I am afraid the mere fact of possession rather lessened Ellen's value in his eyes; while Maggie's gift of virginal wonder—the untranslatable piquancy and freshness that pertain to a nature unexplored—made the pretty little blonde in the foreground attract his wandering eyes more than once.

And Ellen, with the sharpened gaze of jealousy, was aware of his every glance.

By-and-by, when the preaching was over—the hymn sung and benediction said—the hitherto com-

pact congregation broke up into numerous little groups that began to disperse through the village, singing snatches of hymns as they went.

George and Lizzie disappeared among the first, slipping off in a rather stealthy way; while Maggie, for some unexplained reason, was one of the last to depart. And not until Maggie left the cliff-top did Sam saunter into the house.

In the kitchen he found Phyllis and 'Siah, with his wife busy "doing the honours" and laying the table for tea. But the matrimonial frost in the atmosphere rather spoiled the meeting after all; though the lovers—those humorous egotists—seemed not to notice the fact; and neither Ellen nor Sam was very sorry when they had the house again to themselves and could bicker and barter insinuations till they finally went up to bed.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE OLD WIVES' REMEDY.

It soon became rumoured in the village that Ellen got on badly with her husband, and a whisper—coming no one knew from whom—suggested that his old sweetheart Maggie could give a shrewd guess at the cause.

Unhappily, that Sam and his wife were no longer as affectionate towards each other as they had been when first they were married, was a fact it was impossible to disguise, and Ellen felt a subtle humiliation at times almost paralyse her life as the busy wasps of gossip buzzed and stung her, and the neighbours watched her curiously the while.

But a certain note of consolation reached her when her irritation seemed at its height.

"Nonsense!" said the wise ones impatiently—as having in their wider experience found a truer perspective for thought—"lev' her wait till she've got her first baby; *that* 'll soon make things all right!"

And for this new solution of the difficulty—a solution which was gradually drawing nearer—Ellen waited with something like impatience, and with such a deep hunger and hope!

The love which at first she had played with, and, in fact, undervalued, *as she knew*, had now become enhanced through withdrawal, and was longed for for reasons so complex that she scarcely cared to own

them to herself; though of this she felt articulately sure, that, as it was her due as a wife, she would possess it if possession were possible, and would share it with no one in the world!

The difficulties that had arisen in Ellen's married life had by no means escaped the observation of her mother, who took sides so harshly against the husband, that her suggestions—sympathetic towards her daughter though they were—had by no means the weight and authority which less partisan utterances would have had.

Ellen, being still in that period of life when marriage has too much to offer for a girl to be willing to give it up, would have been far better pleased to gather from her mother some wise hints for managing Sam and securing his love for herself, than to listen to diatribes against him, that left the main issue unchanged. And from this point of view, the most useful of her acquaintances was not her mother—who was brimful of sympathy which was wholly compounded of ingredients that might make it agreeable to her pride—but her neighbour, one Biddy Chynoweth, who, though now barely forty years of age, had a family of fourteen *alive*.

"It's all foolish nonsense," said Biddy, "to lay all th' fau't on th' men. They arn't a bit wuss than ourselves. Wha's the harm ef their fancies *do* wander—doan't ours wander too, unbeknawn? Arn't there many men we'd like to git a kiss from, ef it warn't so plaguy hard to git th' chaance? Why, bless 'ee! marr-riage doan't make no deference; we got courtin' fancies all our life. Onnly wemmin caan't indulge them as men can. But I doan't feel no envy—not I! I've got as much fun out o'

marr-riage as I ever e'spected to git—and a fine sight more, too, to tell the truth!—and I wedn' grudge a man a bit o' flirtin' ef he feels he must have it for a change; for we're sure to git th' best o' th' bargain in some way or auther, sim to me."

And in this novel view of the subject Ellen seemed to see a glimmer of sense.

It was early in April that it happened—the advent of the long-expected stranger—a squealing little lobster-hued youngster, apparently all legs and arms.

But Ellen was delighted with her present, and her husband felt so sheepishly conceited that he had to go out to get a drink and let all his friends know the news.

It was quite a time of triumph for Ellen when the baby was being handled and dandled by this one and that one who called; and from Phyllis, who beslobbered him with kisses, to Lizzie, who was critical and cool, the youngster got his full share of praises, and almost had his face kissed away.

Nor was Sam behind the others in his homage, though he showed it with less parade and fuss, for he took to Little Lobster (as he called him) with a quiet appreciation from the first.

"And now," thought the young wife delightedly, "our new life will surely begin."

CHAPTER IX.

A LITTLE LEAVEN.

“ Ev’ry day I met her
Tripping down the street;
Till I grew a debtor
To her twinkling feet;
Loving nothing better
Than the laughter sweet
Aimed at me who met her
Tripping down the street.”

J. H. P.

APPARENTLY the advent of a baby is not *always* equivalent to a revolution, whatever the prophets may foretell, for the presence of Little Lobster in the house, though undoubtedly a fact of importance, by no means restored to his mother the crown which she knew she had lost.

Although Sam and Ellen lavished on him as much love as lay in their gift, their tenderness towards the wee infant produced little appreciable effect on the mutual relations of his vassals, as they both of them speedily perceived.

Ellen’s pride was as quick to take offence and her temper as prompt to ignite, and Sam’s trick of looking out for Maggie seemed to grow from a wish to a want, notwithstanding that he fondled Little

Lobster as much as a young father could, and frankly believed him to be the very finest baby in the world.

Still, the baby brought his pleasures and compensations—if one needed compensations on the score of having such a fetich for thought—and the millinery exhibitions and parades became quite a feature of life.

True, Ellen was not able to dress the baby as stylishly as she could wish, but, with Phyllis and granny to assist her, she managed to make him “quite a littleswell,” and would often walk for hours on the cliff-top with Sammy lolling redly in her arms.

That summer Ellen triumphed over Maggie with all a young mother's proper pride, and took her place so grandly among the matrons that Maggie laughed in spite of herself.

Unhappily, to complicate matters, before little Sammy could walk a wee sister came to keep him company—it was in the next April, I think—and from that day the cradle in the kitchen seemed to never want an occupant for years.

Of course, with two babies on her hands—for Sammy was as yet little more—Ellen got a bit slipshod and draggled, was a little less careful of herself; and now Maggie shone out unrivalled, and the contrast cut Ellen to the quick.

A fresh-hearted, pleasant-natured maiden in the daintiest blossom-time of life, little Maggie Trenwith was at present as charming as a man could desire.

Her winsomely girlish face, with its tender deep-blue eyes, had a certain coy demureness when she

life, beyond what was, as it were, *forced* from her by the need of fulfilling her tasks. The gossip about the catches meant gossip about money—about something that concerned her in her daily affairs; but the gossip about the boats, their appearances and qualities, and the talk about the many simple interests and fancies which make up the staple of a fisherman's thoughts—when these were introduced she was invariably preoccupied, and let the talk die of inanition if it would.

But she thought it hard that Sam should not listen to her gossip about the dresses of the children and the prices of food—what this neighbour said, and what that neighbour fancied, and how a third wasted her money and her time; and was often cross and hurt at the callousness of her husband towards matters that for her had such interest and life.

But Maggie understood Sam much better, and could match her talk with his in a manner that won upon him every time they met.

The names of the boats Ellen never could remember; nor who were their owners or what was their speed. But Maggie could have told in an instant, off-hand, their names and their owners' names, and what nets they carried, their average speed, and their history to boot. In all things pertaining to the boats and the fishing—to the whole range, in fact, of a fisherman's pursuits—Maggie took an exceptional interest; they seemed meat and drink to her thoughts. And Sam could be always sure of sympathy, of finding an echo to his moods, if he saw Maggie only for a minute, and they merely exchanged half-a-dozen words. So that often, after casually meeting her, Sam

ground his teeth at thinking of his blunder in not taking her for a wife—"when he had the chance: fool that he was!"

And this is the way the leaven was working in the second year of Ellen's married life.

CHAPTER X.

THE GROWTH OF A SEED.

It was a wild and blustering autumn, either wind or rain the whole day long, and Malachi Trenwith, who was an elderly man and had married rather late in life, felt the trying weather somewhat keenly, and seemed to be ailing all the time.

Finally, when the gurdy blasts of winter began to growl across the waters of the bay, Malachi grew so weak and feeble that he was unable to mount and descend the stairs, and must either lie all day in the bedroom, or take up his abode in the little back-parlour that opened into the draughty shop.

To be separated from his business was martyrdom to Malachi, who had never since his marriage morning spent a complete day out of his shop—and, in fact, if the gossips of the village could be believed, was wont to spend the greater part of Sunday in making up his books for the week—so that the withered old huckster, when the matter became so urgent as this, decided, without a moment's hesitation, in favour of giving up his bedroom and sleeping near his candles and cheese.

He was warned, however, by the doctor—whom Maggie one morning called in—that to remain in the draughty little parlour would undoubtedly hasten his death; but Malachi could by no means

be shaken in his decision, and persisted in sitting propped up in a chair beside the tiny window that overlooked the shop.

During Malachi's protracted illness, Maggie proved a most affectionate nurse, but as a shop-keeper she caused her father endless anxiety, and embittered almost every moment of his life.

Malachi was so scrupulously careful in everything—he had been known to cut a raisin in two to make weight—that when, on peering through the little window, he spied Maggie generously “dumping down” the scales in weighing out the currants or the sugar, the sight cut him to the heart.

Indeed, he once actually discovered his daughter making a child a present (!) of a paper of sweets; and the excitement of the incident so shook and upset him, that Malachi fainted away in his chair.

When he recovered, he found Maggie bending over him, and began at once to babble of his griefs.

“Thee’lt ruin us; we shall die in th’ workhouse! Aw dear, whatever shall I do!” And Malachi lay in his armchair groaning and wringing his hands with a look so ludicrously woebegone—so grotesque in the quality of its griefs—that Maggie scarcely knew at the moment whether to laugh or to weep.

Each day Malachi grew weaker and weaker, until he was compelled to take to his bed. But even when he lay almost buried in the pillows—little more, in fact, than a skinful of bones—he would personally handle every penny received, and would count out the change with his own trembling hands.

And never, in the whole of his life, had Malachi

occasionally tried to play the woman, as she often did to sober down the boys; but always there was a hint of underlying archness, which the inimitable dimples in her cheeks and the dainty bud of her mouth heightened for the lads of the village to a quite irresistible extent, so that, in spite of her demureness, Maggie was always being wooed.

And how could it well be otherwise, seeing what a charm there was in the tempting curves of her cheeks, in the half-shy glance of her eyes, and the ripple of girlish laughter playing around her lips? In addition to which, as in most young girls, there was that absolutely indefinable attractiveness dependent solely upon youth—on the virginal poise of the body and the virginal poise of the mind—an attractiveness which, for the lads of the village, had something of the subtile coercion of a spell.

But though the main current and intention of a life may be absolutely pure and virginal, and beyond possibility of reproach, it will still feel the feminine instincts and yearnings that prepare the young maiden by a thousand monitions for the rôle of the wife and the mother, which at no distant date (if Fate wills it) she hopes to delightedly fill. And Maggie, half shy and half coaxing, with a woman's warm blood in her veins, felt at times a vague stirring within her, which no one must know but herself.

Two or three youngsters of the village had already deliberately tried to woo her, but had quietly but decisively been repelled; and the girl, who was now one-and-twenty, and a good chance for "means" as well as looks, began to be a bit of a puzzle to the wiser old gossips of her sex.

But Maggie paid little attention to their tattle, and went her own way undismayed.

It was a narrow world that Maggie had knowledge of, and the lives with which she came in contact had rather the wholesome charm of familiarity than the more fascinating charm of personal magic—unless one associated the latter with Sam, which would surely be making a joke of the thing.

She had often fancied, in her girlish fashion, that she would like to be the centre of romantic incidents; but she had never found any one sufficiently unfamiliar with her to see in her other than Malachi's daughter, "that little girl that do 'tend in th' shop." So that her world, as at present constituted, seemed to offer no chance for her rather vague day-dreams to ever grow visible in the grey world of facts.

But there was not a touch of sourness in the girl's composition, though romance thus persistingly held aloof from her. The sunlit village, with its wind-shorn hill-tops, and especially the grim and masterful ocean, with the white sails moving ghost-like across it, and great storms vexing it ever and anon, were as precious to Maggie as to the archangel Michael in his splendid outlook over the world; while as for the life that centred at the hearthside, Maggie never once asked if she wearied of or loved it—the girl only knew it as the bird knows its nest.

Maggie's mother had died when she was comparatively young, and her father—who kept a grocer's shop and was said to be fairly well-to-do—left his daughter pretty much to herself in the matter of her friendships and pleasures, seeing only that her duties to himself were in every way strictly performed. So that Maggie, free from motherly obser-

vation, and by no means unversed in finesse, held her freedom as something too precious to be bartered for any passing whim, and appeared to have settled down quietly to wait till her heart should have ripened, and the right man should come to pluck the prize.

But the gossips averred that the "right man" was already in the village waiting now.

It must not be imagined for a moment that the two years of Ellen's married life had had only a disintegrating influence on her wifely relations with Sam. On the contrary, the years had in numberless ways interwound their interests as well as their lives. Unhappily, the copartnership created—though inevitable, and pleasant enough at first—was one that in no way brought nearer the companionship of hearts they had sought. They paid the tithes due to each other with a carelessness evident enough, and carried on the joint concern of housekeeping on its lowest and least ideal base. But there their copartnership ended. Their inner lives centred apart. If the furniture slowly accumulated and the children (more rapidly) increased, these were parts of the grosser side of housekeeping, and belonged to the routine of life; all the finer dreams and fancies of passion pertained to a past that was dead, till the couple grew as frankly materialised as the grim needs of life could desire.

Unhappily, it is impossible but that physical maturity along with the virtues of virility should bring also some of its vices; and in Sam, along with advancing manhood, the cares of paternity and the disillusionment of experience, there was noticeable also a demoralising tendency which, while giving a

certain manly breadth, gave also a certain masculine coarseness to what one might call the totality of his life. In action and in speech—in as far as he indulged in it—as well as in the subtler indications in the face, this coarsening of fibre and deprivation of ideals was as marked as the mere wear and tear of the frame; and Sam, as a husband and father, had the mud of life's streets in his soul.

Ellen, though less thoroughly demoralised, was almost as much disillusioned, in spite of having certain compensations which maternity brought as its dower. Before her marriage she was a fresh-natured maiden, full of simple, silly illusions, though with healthy human passions, of course. She had also a little girlish slyness, and a sprightliness pleasant to see. Unhappily, in the clash of wills with Sam, she had become less sprightly and far less lovable; while a little selfishness and much self-will had been developed as protective traits against her husband, and seemed to be now part and parcel of her life.

She no longer rejoiced in her marriage, but endeavoured to do her duty to her husband and to cultivate the bitter herb content.

And Sam, though he saw the change in her, gave no sign of viewing it with grief.

In Sam's pursuits Ellen took no interest whatever, beyond that of performing the task-work which happened to fall to her share. If the nets required repairing, she would repair them; if a guernsey must be knitted, she would do it; and if the fish needed to be "bulked" or attended to, to the cellar she accordingly went to do the work.

But she never showed any signs of interest in his

reasons sour old Malachi owed him a grudge, was all the while full of uncomfortable anticipations with reference to his own little debt, which, trivial though it might seem to others, he was at present quite unable to pay.

Accordingly, one day meeting Maggie—whom he seldom had a chance to converse with now that her father was so ill—he ventured to refer to the subject which of late had so haunted his thoughts.

“I ben wantin’ to see ’ee, Maggie,” he mumbled: “there’s that there little bill I owe.”

“Iss?” said Maggie, seeing that he paused.

“I see thee haven’ sent un in yet.”

“Do ’ee want to pay it?” Maggie asked quickly.

“No—o . . . tesn’ that . . . I doan’t want it . . . I’m glad thee haven’ sent it: that’s th’ truth. I was haaf afeerd thy father would do so. I know he doan’t like me,” said Sam.

“Well,” said Maggie, helping him forward, “what was ’ee wantin’ o’ me?”

“I was thinkin’ p’r’aps ef Malachi should mention it thee could manage . . . thee know how we are sitiuated. . . .”

“Thee can make thy mind aisy,” said Maggie; “I’ll see thee arn’t troubled weth that.”

Sam gave her a look so grateful—and withal so unexpectedly kind—that Maggie grew confused and blushed hotly, and then turned and rapidly walked away.

About a week after Maggie and Sam thus met, Malachi drew up his feet and died.

The day before his end, finding death was drawing near, Maggie asked him whether he would see the minister, whose admittance to the house he had

hitherto barred. But Malachi peevishly, and yet withal resolutely, refused to let any one trouble his thoughts.

As gently as possible, Maggie urged upon him that a talk with the minister might make his mind easier, and, besides, would be a reasonable preparation for his end.

"I waan't see un. . . . What should I see un for? . . . S'pose weth his oily palaver . . . 'a should werry me . . . an' send me off to sleep? . . . Who knows but th' cash-box . . . might tempt un? . . . We are all of us mortal," gasped Malachi, while his breath rattled hoarsely in his throat.

"But, father . . ." began Maggie, very gently.

"I tell 'ee . . . I waan't . . . have un here. . . . He might try . . . to worm out things . . . lemme quaat. . . . Do 'ee want to kill me off . . . 'fore me time?" And thereupon, fondling his cash-box, he turned away his face to the wall.

Just about an hour before his end he made Maggie go through once more the list of debts still uncollected, and gasped out instructions respecting them, till his strength was so wholly exhausted that he suddenly seemed to collapse and fall among the pillows in a heap.

Whereat Death at once took him by the throat and deliberately shook out his life.

CHAPTER XI.

A MEDLEY OF MOTIVES.

Now Maggie in her own small way was an heiress—or, at any rate, could live without working, if she wished—suitors again began to gather about her, and the girl stood a good chance of soon getting spoiled.

But she held her own firmly, in spite of their palaver, and gave no one a chance of either biting or bridling her, or in any way claiming the shadow of a right.

Although there could be no reason for his watching her, Sam found himself keenly interested in the struggle that went on for the possession of Maggie and her money; and I am afraid if his wife could have tracked his thoughts to the dusky corners into which they retreated she would have angrily resented their heat and curiosity in a matter with which he had so little to do. But Sam was a quiet, taciturn man, given more to ruminating in a bovine fashion than to recklessly squandering his energy in speech, and though he assiduously watched his old sweetheart his reason (if he had one) remained unsurprised.

It was a hard winter for the folks in the village—the fishing having proved a dreary failure, both the autumn and winter being equally bad—and unhap-

pily many of the fishermen and their families were suffering from an actual scarcity of food.

Sam, however, though he was sorely straitened, and in debt to an extent which would cripple him for years, was not so poverty-stricken as many of his fellows, owing to the careful management of his wife. But the household expenses were curtailed so pitilessly that both candlelight and firelight had to be economised, and Ellen was half her time patching and darning that they might keep up a decent appearance through it all. Butcher's meat was rather a rarity in the house, and even butter and sugar had occasionally to be foregone, their diet consisting principally of bread and treacle, with fish and potatoes now and then for a change. Yet Ellen and the children bore it all uncomplainingly, though Ellen's cheeks began to get suspiciously hollow, and a wearied look permanently settled on her face.

And now it was that Sam showed a selfishness which Ellen ever after bore in mind.

The best of whatever was in the house he always appropriated to himself, and in scores of ways—trivial individually, though significant when considered in the mass—he showed the coarse grain in his nature to a quite unexpected extent.

Meanwhile Maggie, unattacked by the epidemic of poverty which was silently working such mischief in their midst, was by no means unaffected by the many signs of suffering which her neighbours and acquaintances so pathetically showed.

To begin with, the bills which her father had been pressing for she allowed to stand over until better times should come, and not only gave the debtors to understand so much, but informed them that any-

been harder to his debtors than he was now while waiting for death.

In vain Maggie tried to reason with him and soften his inexorable decision to gather in all the cash he could before he went out of the world: he was determined (he said) to have his debts settled, or else she would surely be cheated when her father was lying in his grave.

Among the other debts which he pressed for, was a small one contracted by Sam, who, in spite of Ellen's icy objections, occasionally dealt at the shop. This account, as not being profitable (or, at least, so he chose to aver), Malachi determined to have settled, whether Sam was offended or not.

The bill in the course of months had run up to about sixteen shillings; and, unhappily, Sam at the moment was living from hand to mouth, the autumn fishery having proved such a failure that the *Kitti-wake* was unable to pay her way, and all her crew were heavily in debt.

Maggie carefully delivered the majority of the accounts—taking them round in the evenings after the shop was shut up—but somehow she seemed to find it impossible to send in Sam Trewartha's bill. Though unwilling to deliver it herself, she did not care to send it by a child, and no other method of forwarding it suggested itself to her thoughts.

She was well aware of Sam's monetary difficulties; for the crippling effects of a bad season were quickly felt through the little village, and every one seemed to be straitened alike. And with this knowledge, and a peculiar sensitiveness which she was rather shy of acknowledging to herself, Maggie felt such a repugnance to the delivery of the message with which

Malachi had charged her when handing her the bill, that she was almost ashamed to face Sam when she met him, and coloured and grew confused to an embarrassing extent.

Malachi, however, kept a list of the accounts, and was constantly inquiring as to who were defaulters, and what this one or that one said when asked to pay up. Although he was unable to sit up in bed, and could only get out half-a-dozen words at a time, having to fight for every breath he drew, he would question and cross-question and badger his daughter about the takings in the shop, and the collection of the bills, until Maggie in the end almost lost patience with him, and even shed tears of vexation to his face.

In the end Maggie, having run through her excuses, was unable to think of any other way of satisfying him than by paying the bill in instalments herself.

But here again a further obstacle arose.

Though her father, for his station, was fairly well-to-do, he kept his daughter scantily supplied with pocket-money, while allowing her a reasonable amount for dress. And, unhappily, just before Malachi's illness Maggie had spent her money on a stylish new outfit—buying a more expensive one than her father was aware of—and at present had only a shilling or two in hand. With this she paid the first instalment of the debt—duly making out a receipt for the amount—but how to raise the balance of the sixteen shillings was a matter on which she was nowise clear.

When she ventured to ask her father for a small present as a reward for attending to affairs of the shop, he practically refused to give her a shilling,

pleading that his illness was so terribly expensive that the profits were melting away rapidly enough. Besides (he reminded her, gasping out the words), the whole of the money—which was little enough, 'twas true—would be her own as soon as he was under the turf, and surely she could patiently wait until then.

So Maggie, despairing of obtaining anything from Malachi, was at last compelled to look in some other direction for the money which she wished to devote to Sam's bill.

She was unwilling to deliberately cheat her father, if, indeed, such a thing was possible in itself—for Malachi seemed to know his stock and its value as accurately as he knew the contents of the cash-box which he always kept under his pillow while he slept—and there was no one from whom she could conveniently borrow, especially with no apparent reason for a loan.

Finally, after ruminating long on the matter, she decided—reluctantly, and with many misgivings—to put some of her trinkets in pledge in Penzance, and afterwards redeem them as circumstances would permit.

To fully appreciate the significance of the resolve, one must bear in mind that Maggie had never entered a pawnshop, and, in fact, shrank as timidly from the terrible ordeal as if to have dealings with the Three Golden Balls was like having dealings with the Old One himself. However, she had decided on this course of action—in obedience to feelings which as yet were obscure—and, inheriting something of Malachi's tenacity, she was determined to carry out the thing she had planned.

The next time her father sent her to Penzance in order to pay some money into the bank, Maggie took with her a couple of her treasured trinkets—choosing those which her father would be unlikely to miss—and made her way to an obscure pawnbroker's. Trembling lest any one who knew her should see her, yet thrilling with a strange exultation and joy, she presently emerged with a rather scared expression, the richer by a golden half-sovereign between her fingers, and the poorer by a deep stain of passion in her soul.

With the welcome ten shillings, thus dangerously obtained, Maggie duly paid off portions of Sam Trewartha's debt, and in the interval managed to scrape together sufficient to pay off the trivial balance that remained. Finally, about two or three days before Christmas, she had the pleasure of receipting the small amount in full, and put the paper safely away among her treasures, with her hands trembling violently as she handled it, and a great tide of colour in her cheeks.

One would almost have fancied that the receipted bill was a tender love-letter, so carefully was it treasured, and such a mixture of half-shy wistfulness and pleasure was expressed in Maggie's countenance when she took it in her hands. But the secret, if there was one, was rigorously guarded, and the paper, through it lay thus housed among her trinkets, was only a commonplace bill after all.

Malachi's decision to collect his debts had already led to much heated gossip in the village, as well as caused many a heartache to the sorely troubled debtors themselves.

And Sam, who was aware that for two or three

thing they wished to get on credit they should have just as freely as if their bills had been paid. Occasionally, too, to the most hunger-smitten families she shyly, and quite without fuss or ostentation, would make a present of the provisions they were most pressingly in need of—now a peck of flour, and now a basket of potatoes, and now, perhaps, a pound or two of home-salted pork—and in this way enabled them to live through the winter with the group at the hearthside unthinned in spite of all.

For some reason—what, I am unable to say, whether it was a shadowy idea of possession, or the sour-natured grudge always latent in his thoughts—Sam appeared to be dissatisfied with Maggie's generosity, seemed to think her benefactions might well have been withheld.

Still, his objections were largely inarticulate—consisting more of shrugs and gestures of innuendo than of words distilled deliberately out of his thoughts—since he was by no means desirous of wantonly offending her, owing to the complexity of motives in his mind.

But Ezekiel Dabb, who was one of Maggie's suitors, and had a shop or kind of store a couple of doors from hers, was by no means so reticent in the expression of his feelings, and blamed her "up and down" with considerable warmth.

Standing in the narrow dooway of his shop and peering out among the blocks and bundles of cordage that hung down on either side of the door, Ezekiel would often discuss with his cronies the way in which Maggie was wasting the money which her father had so laboriously saved, and professed him-

self surprised that poor old Malachi could quietly rest in his grave through it all.

One stormy afternoon towards the end of January, when the sleet was whirling over the village, and the crooked little streets were grimy with slush, Ezekiel, peering out guardedly through his doorway—for the sleet was by no means pleasant to face—noticed a chattering group of children making their way towards Maggie's shop. At the door stood Maggie, who greeted them smilingly, and into the shop the little ones went.

Though Ezekiel now watched somewhat narrowly, he did not see them again emerge; but instead, in a little while, other children, in twos or threes or tiny clusters, began to drift in the same direction, and duly disappeared into the shop.

And this continued at intervals during the afternoon.

Towards dusk, when the villagers began to light their candles, Ezekiel kindled his couple of lamps, and noticed with surprise that his neighbour Maggie, instead of lighting up her shop as usual, was busy putting up the shutters instead.

This was too much for Ezekiel's curiosity; he must find out the meaning of these "minoovers" forthwith. So he hastily clapped on his worn straw hat, and having closed the shop-door carefully behind him, went across to Maggie's to ask what it meant.

"Come in!" said Maggie, in response to his question, and led him through the shop to the roomy kitchen which was situated in the rear of the parlour where Malachi breathed his last.

The sight that met Ezekiel's eyes so completely "flabbergasted" the worthy shopkeeper, that his

face might have served as a model for surprise—such a jaw-dropping, eye-rounding, muscle-stiffening wonder transformed it as he gazed at the scene.

In the high-backed settle in the chimney-corner, on the couple of forms that ran along the walls, in Malachi's armchair, and on Malachi's footstool, and on every other chair or apology for a seat, children were clustered and wedged together, chattering, laughing, brimming over with fun; while the table near the window was laden with eatables—saffron-cake and buns predominating, of course—and the kettle on the fire was singing as noisily as if it understood the part it had to play, and was waxing delightfully merry at the thought. From the great wooden rafters hung paper lanterns with coloured candles alight inside, while gaily-dressed dolls—of wood and china—and a few cheap toys of attractive appearance hung from the beams by bits of cord.

Some noisy but good-humoured children's game was in progress as Ezekiel thrust in his head—the performers standing in a ring around a girl who had a red cotton handkerchief bound about her eyes—and the clapping of hands and the shouts and the laughter made the whitewashed rafters ring again.

"Golly! this'll be expensive!" were the first words Ezekiel spoke.

"But esn' it a putty picture?" asked Maggie, now at his side.

"Well . . . I arn't goin' to say it esn' . . . it may be putty, in a way. . . . But, Lor'! what a sight o' vittles!" said Ezekiel, wrinkling his brow. "Tes a waste o' money, Maggie—a' awful, horrible waste!" And Ezekiel sighed as he said it, thinking of many things.

"It's makin' them happy," said Maggie.

Ezekiel merely groaned.

"'Tis a sight wuth payin' to see," added Maggie, enjoying the scene.

"Well, I wedn' ha' b'leeved it possible that a maiden reared like thee should act in this way, Maggie! 'Twould ha' brok' thy faather's heart!"

By this time the children were listening, as Maggie plainly perceived; so she moved back into the shop, and Ezekiel did the same.

"I thought better things of 'ee, Maggie!"

"Listen, Ezekiel Dabb! You have come in merely as an acquaintance; if you wish to pass out no worse you had better shut up!" said Maggie, with a sudden flash in her eyes.

Ezekiel was puddle-natured, but he understood none the less.

"Well, every fool to his folly!" said he, and so went out.

Maggie closed the door behind him and laughed aloud in the shop.

"That's one wooer less!" said Maggie, thinking of many things.

* * * * *

With the spring, affairs began to mend a little. The mackerel-fishery of March and April was fairly successful, much to every one's relief, and the village began to put on a hopeful aspect as the sunshine played on the roofs and sidewalks, and the faces in the streets occasionally smiled.

The burdensome debts of the past winter hung, however, heavily around the necks of most, and there were few new suits for the menfolk and few

new dresses for the wives to be seen in the little village among those who lived by the sea.

But Maggie, who had suffered but little by the depression, came out at Easter in a fine new dress, with a hat and other adornments to match, and Ellen, who was by this time somewhat dowdy, felt the contrast keenly enough.

It was impossible, however, for Ellen at present to indulge in the luxury of a new gown, so she had to be content with trimming up her old one and making it look as neat as she could. And even the children would have fared but badly in the matter of clothes this particular spring, if Phyllis had not bravely come to the rescue and helped her sister over the stile. For another little stranger came to wail in the cradle just as the hawthorn was beginning to bloom, and this, combined with the other expenses, kept the household funds at their lowest ebb. But Phyllis—though, like 'Siah, saving up for her marriage—could not find it in her heart to let the children look shabby for the want of a few shillings out of her purse, so she gave up some of her ribbons and knick-knacks and spent the money on the children instead.

The contrast now between Maggie and Ellen was piquant enough for the dullest to notice, and Sam dwelt on it more than was wise.

While Maggie, fresh-cheeked, rounded, and plump, was flitting about the village in the fresh spring sunshine with sparkling eyes and a smile on her lips, her neat little figure in its tasteful draperies catching the eye with a grace of its own, Ellen moved heavily about in her cottage with a new-born infant hanging at her breast and little Nelly constantly tugging at

her gown, while Sammy, with his round face smeared and sticky and his long curls tousled and tossed about his eyes, was dragging around the chairs or teasing his sister and filling the house with his ceaseless din.

The cries of the children and the querulousness of his wife—who was over-worked and underfed—made Sam so dissatisfied with his indoor life now the warmth of spring was abroad in the world, that he used to spend most of his time on the cliff-top, from whence Maggie's shop was always visible, as it stood at a corner of the principal cart-road that ran from Mousehole round to Penzance. Lounging here, he would often catch sight of Maggie standing in the doorway of her well-stocked shop, and her smile or nod by way of greeting by-and-by became so alluring to him that he hated to spend a single day without this furtive zest to his thoughts.

But Maggie's behaviour was remarkably circumspect, and though she must have seen from many indications the infatuation which was mastering Sam, she gave no more sign of understanding their significance than if the decision which had led to his marriage was irrevocable in feeling as well as in fact.

In June about forty of the Mount's Bay boats sailed away west for the herring fishing, which was usually followed in the St. George's Channel till the pilchards made their appearance in the bay. And among the many who went from Newlyn were Sam Trewartha and George Polsue.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RETURN OF THE BOATS.

THE herring fishing proved extremely successful, and the Mount's Bay boats did remarkably well.

And Ellen, who was troubled about what she owed—in fact, went often without proper food, so anxious was she to save every penny until she could shake herself free from debt—began to rejoice in the pleasant prospect of soon regaining her self-respect.

Under the influence of this new-born hope she recovered something of her old vivacity—in spite of the brood of children at her heels—and again began to sing with a note of cheerfulness as she rocked the cradle or bustled about the house.

The recovered gaiety so noticeable in Ellen seemed to act on Maggie in a peculiar way. Occasionally Ellen had a letter from Sam—written in his name by one of his mates—and it was always after the receipt of a letter that Ellen's voice rose loudest in song. Was it possible that Maggie had a touch of jealousy—re-creating Sam's letters in accordance with her mood, and imagining all sorts of things he might say—and felt that a husband and wife corresponding might in some way. . . . But there, she was ashamed of this silliness! What a blessing it was no one knew it but herself! What was Sam

more to her than any other man? Let him write to his wife as lovingly as he chose; she envied Ellen neither her babies nor her man! And yet, somehow, Maggie grew strangely discontented, and the more Ellen carolled the more Maggie gloomed.

Lizzie, too, had also a touch of jealousy, though not of the same self-torturing type.

As she saw Phyllis steadily preparing for her marriage, and 'Siah as steadily garnering too, she began to grow envious of Phyllis's position when contrasted with her own flimsy hold upon George, and the doubt if he ever would have money enough to marry her even if he suddenly felt so disposed.

Finally, after thinking out the matter in her own impetuous way, Lizzie made up her mind to go in service and earn a little money for herself. And, accordingly, soon after midsummer, she obtained a situation as housemaid in the neighbouring town of Penzance.

Meanwhile, the reports received from the boats that were away on the herring fishery continued satisfactory, and Ellen's face again began to get back its colour as she gradually allowed herself a little better food in view of the money which would fall to Sam's share when they came to divide the profits of the boat in which he sailed.

At the end of July the first shoals of pilchards began to make their appearance between Scilly and the Wolf, and presently the catches became so promising that the news travelled west to those on the herring fishery, where the season was now drawing to a close. Accordingly, the boats in the Irish Channel turned their heads south, and steered homeward again, and the wives began to daily scan the distant horizon

to see if the sails of the wanderers were in sight.

By-and-by, late one afternoon, the watched-for sails were descried in the distance, and the cry immediately ran through the village that the boats from Ireland were out in the bay.

Ellen was all agog with excitement at the prospect of once more seeing her man after their first separation since their marriage, and something of a tremulous girlish tenderness—a touch of the sweet-heart rather than of the wife—seemed to soften her eyes as she kissed the children and tidied them up for “father’s” return.

Maggie, too, felt a little flutter of excitement—flushings of warmth around the heart, as it were—and was more than half inclined to go down to the harbour and watch the homecoming of the boats with the rest. But if Sam, in his happiness at again meeting Ellen, should discover an unsuspected tenderness towards his wife, Maggie thought she would rather not witness the interview . . . and thereupon her cheeks began to tingle and burn. Finally, for reasons—prudential or otherwise—of which she acknowledged the inhibitory power, she decided to merely watch the scene from the doorway, or even, if need be, screened behind the panes.

The afternoon sunshine fell warmly through the air, and the waters of the bay were like liquid lapis lazuli—such a rich feast of hues as the eye gets but rarely, and the thoughts recall often when the splendour has passed—and Ellen felt so girlishly blithe at the moment that her cheeks flushed with colour and her eyes filled with light.

Leaving little Nelly to the care of a neighbour, with Sammy’s hand in hers and the baby on her

arm, Ellen presently made her way down to the harbour, just as the first of the boats was coming in.

The greetings between the fishermen and their friends on the pier were hearty enough to make Ellen's pulse leap and flutter as she leaned against the granite wall waiting for Sam; and she nodded and smiled, exchanging greetings with her neighbours, with a freedom which was rather unusual for *her*.

As the third boat, however, approached the little harbour, Ellen's heart gave a jump that almost took away her breath. For there was the skipper of the boat Sam had sailed in, standing—with such a strange look on his countenance—on the deck of a boat that was certainly not his own, and with which he, presumably, had nothing to do.

The significance, however, of the incident Ellen failed for the moment to comprehend.

Presently the boat sailed into the harbour, and Ellen perceived with wonder and alarm that she was being subjected to a peculiar scrutiny by the group of fishermen gathered on the deck.

They looked at her curiously, and then whispered together; seemed about to address her, but suddenly desisted; and then fell to whispering and eyeing her again.

At last, when they began to fasten the mooring-ropes, Ellen—too excited to any longer remain silent—hailed the grizzled old skipper with whom her husband had sailed.

"William Pascoe!" she shouted: "William Pascoe!"

The skipper glanced towards her, paling strangely.

"Where's Sam? Where's me husband?" shouted she.

"I'm comin'!" called the skipper: "wait a minute!" And he thereupon climbed on the quay and fronted her face to face.

"Wha's th' matter? Where's Sam?" Ellen gasped.

"God forgive me! 'tis wuss than I bargained for," quoth William Pascoe, turning away his head.

Ellen seized him by the shoulder and fronted him, her face almost thrust against his.

"Our boat was run down..." began the skipper.

Ellen gave a loud scream, and whitened painfully; and the baby would have dropped from her arms if the skipper had not put out his hand.

"And Sam?" she gasped.

"Lost," said the skipper, speaking, as it were, under his breath.

"Quick! some of you wemmin come an' howld her!" She was surely about to faint, thought the skipper as he saw the ghastly pallor on her face.

But Ellen strained her infant to her bosom and still stood erect on her feet.

"Any sign? any hope?" she asked hoarsely.

"None," said the skipper very gently.

Ellen clutched Sammy's hand till he blubbered:

"Come! le's be goin' home," said she.

"Me stay, muvver! see pitty boats!" pleaded Sammy, with the tears in his eyes.

But Ellen scarcely noticed Sammy's whimper; her face made the skipper's eyes moist.

"Shall I carr-ry th' baby for 'ee, missis?"

"No, thank 'ee... no-o," she said dreamily, and so walked back mutely to her house.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF LOVING AND LIKING.

“ Now, in there came little Jenny Wren
With mony a sigh and groan ;
‘ Oh, what care I for a’ the lads
If my true lad be gone ! ’ ”

WHEN Maggie heard the news, for a minute she could scarcely believe her own ears.

“ Wha’s that you’re saying ? ” she questioned.
“ The *John Wesley* run down ? Who’s lost ? ”

“ Onnly Joe Quick an’ Sam Trewartha . . . ”

Maggie summoned all her strength to her rescue, but she blenched and her mouth fell half open : something seemed to have happened to her heart.

She recovered, however, in an instant. But her hand sought her side and remained there ; and she certainly looked somewhat white.

“ O-o-h ! what a pity ! ” faltered Maggie, leaning against the doorpost as she spoke.

“ I thought thee’d be sorry , ” said her neighbour.

“ Iss, that I am , ” rejoined Maggie. “ Poor fellows ! . . . What a trial for their wives ! . . . I s’pose there’s no hope ? ”

“ None whatever . ”

“ But how were the other men saved ? ”

“ They was picked up a few minutes arter by Jimmy Baragwanath in the *Lark* . ”

“ And how did he manage to find them ? ”

"A pure case o' Providence, they say. The *John Wesley* went down in a minute—cut in two as clayne, so they tell me, as a knife could cut a tatie in two—an' the men was all struggling in the water when Jimmy's boat come plump among them, an' he heerd their screams an' so picked them up. But Sam an' Joe Quick warn't among them, an' nowan never seed them no more."

"And the vessel that ran them down—dedn' *she* stop?"

"Not for wan single second, so they say."

Maggie glanced to and fro somewhat strangely.

"I'm sorry," she said, and went in.

"She got plenty o' sperrit," said the neighbour. "I should like to know what she *railly* thinks."

And she bustled off to see another gossip and discuss the matter lengthily with *her*.

Not once, but a dozen times that evening, Maggie had to hear the tragedy discussed, and, knowing that her neighbours watched her closely—for reasons by no means obscure—she had to control her every gesture, till the strain of such constant self-repression seemed to make her heart sicken and faint. Yet she chatted and waited on her customers, and mastered the sickness as she could.

But when the weary evening was ended and the shutters at last were put up, Maggie gave a long sigh of relief and sat down to quietly think.

What had passed between herself and Sam Trewartha—if anything—no one could know. They were counted as "nothing to each other" in the current opinion of the world, and Maggie had to so shape her conduct as to keep this decision undisturbed.

True, the girl had certain hopes and imaginings, certain thoughts sparkling out in her blood, which belied the world's current opinion; but what were they worth to her now?

Maggie leaned her head down on the table and buried her face in her hands, but whether she was weeping or praying or merely asleep who shall say?

Meanwhile, Ellen, having shut herself in, had a brief spell of weeping in the kitchen—with the children playing horses all the while—till the rush of thoughts so checked emotion that her eyes grew at last hot and dry.

"*A widow!*" she kept constantly repeating—"a widow! . . . a widow so soon!" And then she fell to thinking of her husband, and her eyes dimmed, and down dropped the tears.

The kaleidoscopic whirligig of images that distracted her mind's eye the while was composed of things trivial and solemn, and of some that were even absurd. Thoughts now affectionate and gentle, now full of gall against herself, and then again sensuous merely, or practical even to a fault, or perhaps tinged with half-furtive carping, crowded and jostled in her mind, till to be compelled to quiet the children became at last an absolute relief.

After giving Nell and Sammy their supper, she tucked them in safely in bed, and then sent the neighbour's eldest boy—a lad about eleven years old—to ask Phyllis to come down to see her and spend the night with her if she could.

Just as the world was being buried in twilight Phyllis stood beneath the porch and laid her hand upon the latch.

Ellen was sitting by the cradle, rocking the baby

to sleep, and staring with strange, tearless eyes at the little face huddled among the clothes, when Phyllis, at last summoning up her courage, opened the door and came in.

Phyllis put her arms around Ellen's neck and pressed her sister's cheek to her own.

"I've heerd all about it," whispered Phyllis. "I'm so sorry, Nelly! Doan't cry!"

But Ellen's eyes were now brimming over, and she violently burst into tears.

By-and-by her sobs woke the baby, who at once began to fretfully wail, and Ellen, in attending to the little one, once more recovered self-control.

The talk between the sisters that night, though prolonged, was of little significance as far as revelations were concerned. Ellen was at present too bewildered to coherently question her heart, and Phyllis was so grieved for her sister that she treated her as one might treat a child, and coaxed her and petted her and soothed her with all the little arts she could command, till the deep wells of feeling within them were practically choked for the time.

But one decision Ellen arrived at as they talked matters over that night, and that was to sell off her furniture in order to settle her debts, and then go to live with her mother and trust her life blankly to fate.

And with this decision finally accepted, the sisters went upstairs to bed.

Within a week after the return of the boats Ellen made it known throughout the little village that she wished to give up house and dispose of her goods.

Phyllis and 'Siah purchased some of the furniture—giving really more than the articles were worth

—and others of the neighbours bought this thing and that thing, till little remained except the cradle and the bed. These Ellen felt she would like to retain, so she had them taken up to her mother's by a carter, and then began to make up and settle her debts.

Unhappily, the money she realised by the sale proved insufficient to relieve her indebtedness; when it was all disbursed to the uttermost penny, she found there was still eighteen shillings unpaid. On which Phyllis and 'Siah came again to the rescue, and generously paid down the money themselves.

And then, at last, Ellen, wearied out and disheartened, set out from the village with her baby on her arm, and returned to her mother without a penny in her pocket, but with three little lives now dependent on her own.

CHAPTER XIV.

OLD SHOES AND RICE.

“What the fool thinketh,
That the bell chinketh.”

THE breaking-up of her home—humble though it was—was a great blow to Ellen, though she bore it so quietly. That her life was a failure she acknowledged to herself, but she would not have admitted it to any one else, least of all to her mother, who, when fretted by the children, occasionally dropped a hint not overwise.

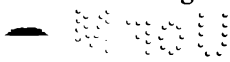
Besides, to return to a position of subordination—for such to all intents and purposes it was—after having been accustomed to a position of responsibility, was just a little galling to Ellen's natural pride. She missed the handling and disbursing of the money, and the freedom from feminine interference in her work, and even in the matter of managing the children she found herself hampered and restricted in her rights. So that Ellen discovered, a little too late, that a life which has once been uprooted and transplanted can never again find its old home as satisfying as before it took root in the new soil it sought.

Her position as a widow, apart from such irritants, she dwelt on but little, and seemed scarcely to regret.

Her liking for Sam had never been absorbing, and his attitude towards Maggie had killed the seedling of love, which, if properly nurtured, might have flourished in her heart. True, there were a thousand somewhat tender associations which interwound their memories, and to that extent their lives; but Ellen, who was not a woman of very deep feeling, accepted associations in a matter-of-fact way, and paid little attention to the subtler sentiments that are vitalised chiefly by introspective thought.

She missed Sam in many ways—material chiefly—and was by no means quite certain that she did not wish him back as a household companion as well as a money-getter, and, indeed, quite apart from the importance which a husband imparts to a life. But, supposing the children could be provided for and her own future reasonably secured, Ellen felt that the burden of her widowhood would not be so hard to endure. Only, if the question of food-getting proved to be more difficult than she thought, and an offer of marriage should be made to her, she *might* perhaps consider the question, though of this she was not at all sure.

Ellen was by no means of an envious disposition—or, at any rate, had little more of the alloy than was practically necessary for the wear and tear of life—but she *did* feel the contrast just a little keenly when she saw Phyllis gradually preparing a home for herself and looked around sadly at her own denuded life. And the contrast was rendered, if possible, even bitterer by the knowledge that the wreckage of her own ruined home was being used to build up her sister's modest nest. But Phyllis had behaved so generously to her that Ellen felt ashamed



of even harbouring such thoughts, and though they occasionally caused a twist in her temper no one was aware to what the twist was due.

Notwithstanding, or it might be because her personal experience had revealed to her only the sordid prose of life, Ellen kept persistently imagining that she discovered in the lives of her neighbours the poetry her own life had missed. In the girlish anticipations of her sister with respect to what marriage had to give, Ellen saw but little exaggeration of the possible felicities in store, having evidently learned nothing by her marriage which her thoughts could dissociate from herself, or which seemed to her generally applicable to the marital relation as such. Accordingly, her envy of Phyllis touched the latter's life on both of its sides—looked regretfully at her housekeeping purchases, and even more regretfully, I fancy, at the day-dreams of which she was the dupe—till Ellen, a little soured by disappointment, almost wished she had never been born.

Unaware of the feelings thus agitating her sister, Phyllis chattered all day long about her hopes and expectations, and delighted her mother with her bright girlish gaiety, though she wearied her a little bit, too, to tell the truth.

And 'Siah—the man was a marvel and a wonder in the facility with which he made a fool of himself, and yet did it all with such happy unconsciousness that the folks who laughed at him laughed with him as well.

The odds and ends of furniture he occasionally purchased were chosen with such ludicrous disregard of their needs that Phyllis could at times with difficulty keep her countenance when he came

with some treasure in his hand or his pocket, or even, it might be, in the head of his hat.

A fat china dog with a basket in its mouth, and a pincushion shaped like a heart with a toad upon it, would be one day carefully produced from his pockets; the next day his offering would be a chromograph of mackerel or a gaudy rag mat to go in front of the fire, while the "bargains" which he purchased—of course, wholly worthless—were absurd enough to startle the gravity of a cow.

For weeks before his marriage he was the laughing-stock of the village, as he was rarely ever seen (when he happened to be alone) without a saucepan or frying-pan or some other utensil slung over his shoulder or dangling in his hand. But he bore all the laughter with cheery good-humour, and would grin back (when grinned at) like any cheeky boy.

Even his mother, who practically worshipped him, grew at last a little weary of his raptures about his sweetheart—who was, naturally, the all-absorbing theme of his talk—while his comrades in the quarry would have teased him unmercifully if it had not been that 'Siah was invulnerable to sarcasm and took all the pleasure out of any attempt at chaffing him by his matter-of-fact cheeriness under all attacks.

When he went to the parson to "put in the banns" he chanced to blurt out that he had never been christened—which, strangely enough, happened to be really the case—and thereupon the parson refused to perform the ceremony until he had duly been baptised in the church. Accordingly 'Siah, much to Phyllis's chagrin, arranged to be christened on the following Sunday morning, and was anxious that



Phyllis should take part in the ceremony, "to see fair play" and to help pull him through.

But this request Phyllis rather shrank from complying with, and managed in the end to cleverly elude. So 'Siah had to go disconsolately through the ceremony while his sweetheart stayed at home with "ralgia" in her teeth.

'Siah's mates from the quarry mustered strongly on the occasion, and endeavoured by every means to put him out of countenance and induce him to break into one of his grins.

But 'Siah was as sober as a judge all the morning, and went through the ceremony with the ludicrous gravity which one sees in a trained poodle dancing a jig.

Of course he was unmercifully chaffed when it was over, but 'Siah was delighted when he happened to remember that he could in future make a brilliant joke out of the affair by saying that he was married within a fortnight of his christening; and he grinned so outrageously while elaborating the fancy that he burst all the buttons off the collar of his shirt.

But, with all his absurdities, he was good to the children, and Ellen took his part in her positive way, in return for which 'Siah redoubled his attentions and made himself as cheap as the children's rag doll.

The wedding came at last, and was a quiet affair, as the shadow of Ellen's still recent misfortune hung a little heavily over them all.

But 'Siah, with his usual adaptability to circumstances, caused a little merriment even in the church.

"Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded

wife," began the minister, and before he could get any further, "Iss, ef you plaise, sir!" quoth 'Siah excitedly, and whipped the ring out of his pocket in a trice.

Immediately there was an audible murmur of "*Hush!*" Phyllis coloured violently, hanging her head; the best man nudged and whispered to the bridegroom, while the minister went on in his monotonous voice; and 'Siah, with the perspiration beading his forehead and the agitation making him shake in his boots, must needs drop the ring from his clumsy fingers, and, of course, away the little cuss rolled!

The best man managed to recover the ring, but Phyllis knew the women in the church were tittering, and felt that the menfolk grinned behind their hats, and she did not again recover her equanimity till the minister joined their hands together and 'Siah and herself were linked for life.

But 'Siah's mates were still unsatisfied, though their share of fun had been reasonably large.

That night, when the newly-married couple were asleep, they were awakened by mysterious sounds on the stairs; sounds not loud enough to indicate footsteps, unless they were those of some uncanny visitor—maybe Uncle Nikklus himself.

A clattering, rattling sound it was, like the pit-pat-pat of an animal with hoofs. But how could such get into the cottage; and why on earth was it coming upstairs!

'Siah sat up in bed, and his hair began to stiffen; and Phyllis shrieked and clung to his arm.

And meanwhile the pit-pat-pat drew nearer with its uncouth clatter and weird suggestions, and 'Siah,

with his teeth now chattering with terror, gasped out, "Aw. . . got a Bible handy?"

"No," gasped Phyllis, with a shiver and a shudder; and thereupon in the Mystery came!

It was only a poor forlorn old tom-cat which someone had mischievously shod with limpet-shells—cruelly sticking them on with pitch—but the fright was one that Phyllis and 'Siah remembered and spoke of as long as they lived.

CHAPTER XV.

A GLANCE AT TWO WOMEN.

“Dear heart ! I am waiting for thee—
Half weary of waiting I grow.
The last leaf is whirled from the tree ;
The daylight is dying like me ;
And the sobbing of wind and of sea
Fills the desolate waste with its woe ;
Till it seems my own sobbing to be ;
Till I fancy the wind and the sea
Are moaning and wailing with me,
Your coming, dear heart, is so slow !”
J. H. P.

ELLEN found the winter more trying than she had expected, and was discontented in more ways than one.

Now the life of Newlyn lay behind her, the vivacity and bustle of its tiny harbour, and the ebb and flow of life among its cottages as the boats put out or the men came home, were pictured by her fancy with adjuncts of interest, which the commonplace reality had but rarely secured. She found herself longing for the gossips in the doorways, and the stir and excitement that vivified the village when the news of a catch became bruited abroad, and even the bulking of the fish in the cellars seemed picturesque rather than repellent to her now. The farm-life had certain attractions of its own which nothing could altogether spoil for her thoughts, but naturally,

with the perversity of poor human nature, the things she had not were the things for which she wished ; and Ellen grew now so peevish and discontented that her mother frankly wished she had never come back.

But Ellen was, of course, the slave of her poverty and with three little children tied to her apron-strings was unable to find a new home for herself.

She would have gone out in service—proud as she was—had her mother been willing to take care of the children ; but this granny flatly refused to undertake ; and although she had barely lost her husband six months, she would gladly have agreed to again become a bride if a reasonable offer had but fallen in her way. But at present she was simply despondent and dependent, and the world seemed so gloomy that she wished she were dead.

Meanwhile, little Maggie Trenwith was equally unsettled, though for different reasons and to quite other ends.

The position Sam Trewartha had held in her life Maggie was unaware of until he was gone ; and then she awoke, with a feeling of desperation, to a knowledge of the pivot he had been for her thoughts.

Why a girl, with so many young men around her, should drift—whether consciously or not, matters little—into such a wild desire for affinity with one, and that one already appropriated by a rival, is one of the problems which can be endlessly argued on ; though the girl, if she wished to, could solve it with a word.

But Maggie's case I do not intend to probe into ; I shall merely state the facts as they happened to emerge.

Maggie had known Sam Trewartha all her life; in fact, ever since they were children together, and had paddled (with their little naked legs exposed freely) in the tiny pools left among the rocks on the shore. She had gone to the same school with him hand-in-hand—they were tauntingly dubbed “little sweethearts” even then—and when they were youth and young maiden, and they both grew aware of their sex, though they scarcely clung together quite so closely, they had kept bashful friends through it all.

Unfortunately, Maggie’s position was somewhat superior to Sam’s, and when they began to get older she could dress so much better than Sam that smarter wooers gathered about her—the best in the village, in fact—and Maggie, who was not without vanity, did not wholly discourage them, I think. She always, however, in her mind preferred Sam before any of his rivals; but this, of course, Sam was unaware of, having no means of getting at the fact, as Maggie, full of tingling muliebrity, was as shy as she very well could be.

While Maggie thus suspiciously held aloof from him, encouraging others more than him, so it seemed Sam had come across Ellen, and, attracted by her freshness, had drifted into courting relations at once.

He was no longer a boy to merely blush and stammer and glance out sheepishly from the corners of his eyes, and consequently the piquancy of his new position—the serious way in which his attentions were taken, and the footing on which he was received by Ellen’s friends—so flattered his vanity and appealed to his fancy that Sam drifted into an

engagement with Ellen almost before he quite knew what he meant.

When affairs had reached this stage, Maggie became alarmed. But instead of making overtures for a treaty of amity—which her pride at the moment refused to let her do—she must needs try to waken the demon of jealousy by pretending to favour a suitor at her side. Finding, however, that this was ineffectual, Maggie dropped her new wooer with a queer, troubled haste, and, summoning to her rescue her sense of self-respect, she accepted her misfortune, and endeavoured to be calm.

And Sam married Ellen, as we know ; and there, perhaps, the story should end. But unhappily, in Mother Nature's stories, the wedding is an interlude only, and the drama moves on none the less ; and in these lives of which I am writing Sam's wedding proved merely a pause.

Apparently, Sam's marriage to Ellen released him from the spell which had mastered him, and he saw the world just as it was, and perceived that his old life was best.

Ever since the marriage, Sam and Maggie had been steadily drifting nearer in their thoughts ; and now that her world was thus emptied of the one life to which her fancies clung, Maggie brooded day and night on the subject, and became as forlornly dejected as if she were widowed indeed.

CHAPTER XVI.

BLIND LOVE.

"If a woman will—she will, you may depend on't:
And if a woman won't—she won't: and there's an end
on't."

ONE pleasant morning towards the end of May, Maggie went to Penzance to make some purchases, and finished up by giving an order for groceries at the stores just opposite the railway-station, which is situated at the eastern end of the town.

She was standing on the pavement in front of the stores, when the passengers from a train that had just arrived began to pour out from the station into the quiet street; and suddenly, among the new arrivals, she perceived a man so much like Sam that she involuntarily gave a little shriek, which attracted the attention of many of the passengers, and especially that of the man himself.

"Why, 'tes Maggie!" exclaimed the man, striding eagerly towards her; and Maggie, trembling in every limb, found her right hand clutched in the strenuous grasp of her one-time sweetheart . . . Sam himself.

She had to lean against the iron railings for support, such a rush of emotion flooded her veins; but she let her hand lie in Sam's as passively as if it there found rest and its home.

"Why, Sam! es it you?" she faltered.

"Iss, Maggie. Arn't 'ee well?" For Maggie looked so white and startled that Sam felt a twitch of alarm.

"Iss, I'm all right," said Maggie, at last withdrawing her hand.

"And how are the cheldern an' Ellen?"

"I haven' seen them for months."

"Have Ellen gone home to her mawther?"

"Iss, sold off an' gone home."

"S'pose she esn' marr-ried agen yet?"

"Not so far as I know."

"It's nearly denner-time, esn' it? I could ayte a bit, couldn' you?"

Maggie looked in his eyes for a minute, and then coloured up to the ears.

"Will 'ee come an' have denner weth me?"

"I couldn' do that for the world!"

"Why not?"

She looked at him steadily, "You know well enough," said she. "There'd be no end of talk about it. It would sure to come out in the end."

"Would 'ee mind it much ef it ded?"

"Wedn' you?"

"I caan't say I should." And he added, with a look so peculiar that Maggie's eyes flashed at his, "It might bring us closer together; I'd stand a dayle for that."

Maggie trembled, full of excitement, and her eyes glittered, brimming with life. "I don't see me way to do it."

"Layve that to me!" said Sam. "Will 'ee come an' have denner weth me?"

And Maggie said quietly, "Iss."

They went to a coffee-shop together, walking tremulously side by side, and had a substantial dinner served in a private room.

Sam watched her with almost breathless eagerness, as Maggie nervously dispensed the eatables, playing the hostess's part for the nonce. "This is just as it should be, Maggie," said Sam, looking full in her face.

"But how was 'ee saved?" asked Maggie. "You haven' yet told me that."

"I'd raather talk of thee," said Sam.

"But I want to hear," quoth Maggie.

So Sam related his tale.

Condensed—for his narrative was long and disjointed—the sum of the matter amounted to this: When the bows of the *Sparrowhawk* struck the *John Wesley*, Sam was on deck enjoying a smoke, and as the great mass, rushing out of the darkness, towered up above him and slashed through the boat, Sam managed to clutch at one of the bobstays, and was saved, as it were, by the skin of his teeth. He was not discovered for several minutes afterwards, by which time the vessel was a considerable distance from the place where the little *John Wesley* had gone down, and when he was rescued and taken up on deck, the officers were horrified at the tale which he told them, having not the faintest idea of the accident, as the fishing-boat was sailing without any light, and had crumbled at a touch like a piece of rotten cheese. The terror and the shock threw Sam into a fever, during which he was delirious for two or three days, and when he recovered he found to his dismay that the *Sparrowhawk* was well on her way towards Valparaiso, and

he had to perforce remain on board and take his chance.

Why he had not written when he arrived at Valparaiso was a question which Sam was most careful to elude; the plain fact being that, debauched by the sailors, he had gone on the spree with others from the vessel, and was finally wheeled back drunk in a hand-barrow, without a penny in his pocket or an idea in his mind. Having missed writing from Valparaiso, he had decided to take his chance in the vessel till her return, and on being ultimately paid off in Liverpool, he had again had a spree and spent three-fourths of his wages, leaving barely sufficient to take him back home. He was careful, however, not to mention this to Maggie, stating only such facts as her fancy could lay hold of and use as excuses for pitying him the more.

Maggie listened to the narrative with the most absorbing interest, and when it was ended drew a long, troubled breath.

"Why, it's like a romance!" muttered Maggie, a remark which was truer than she knew. "What a lot you've gone through since I saw 'ee!" and she looked at the bearded face before her with a glance full of tenderness and pride.

"Iss, I've gone through a lot o' trouble, Maggie, sense I last seed 'ee standin' in your shop. But I think it was wuth goin' through all of it, for th' sake o' this here mittin' at the end."

Maggie looked down and blushed, but was silent. And then Sam at last began to plead. Would she sell off and go away with him? They could set up a shop in Liverpool, and no one need know he had

returned; they might think he was drowned and "gone dead." And wouldn't they live happily together! And shouldn't she enjoy herself then! And warming as his scheme was unfolded, he reverted to the days of their youth, and how she had promised him so often to be his little wife by-and-by; and here was the chance they had been waiting for; and what was to hinder them now?

Maggie hesitated—trembling and flushing—but her common-sense conquered at last.

"It's no use our talking of such matters; our lives are cut out for us both. Besides, we were seen near the station. And, anyhow, I *caan't* do it, Sam!"

In vain Sam endeavoured to shake her decision; she had something of Malachi's tenacity of purpose, and her old sweetheart found that blushing Maggie Trenwith had a woman's strength of will in her dainty little frame.

But she would not be too hard upon him; her leaping pulse would not sanction that.

Though she could not uproot her life for him, she would give him such gifts as she had. And when Sam begged a kiss, "if she loved him," she gave him the kiss as a pledge.

And therewith they built a bridge between them that their hearts might be separate no more.

CHAPTER XVII.

A MEETING AT MILKING-TIME.

“Oh, then this valiant mariner
Who sailed across the sea,
Oh, he came home to his own true love
With his heart so full of glee :

“With his heart so full of glee, sir,
And his pockets full of gold,
And his bag of drugget with many a nugget
As heavy as it could hold !”

It was five o'clock in the afternoon, and Ellen was busy milking the cows.

The meadow where the patient animals were pastured was not very far from the grandmother's house, and was immediately adjoining the dusty highway, which could just be seen between the bars of the gate.

Ellen had brought the baby with her, and had laid the little one down on the grass, where she kicked and crowed to her heart's content ; while Sammy, who had trotted after his mother, ran about picking the “booful f'owers,” and otherwise generally enjoying himself.

Prying about with the inquisitiveness of a child, and contemplating with round-eyed, open-mouthed wonder, at one time the structure and movements of the cows, and at another time the insects crawl-

ing over the grass, the little fellow moved with the glamour of childhood ever granting to his eyes a vision of its own, and found in the meadow such mysteries and marvels as grown-ups can only have sight of in dreams.

"Pitty sing! pitty sing!" said Sammy, half aloud, as he touched the cow gently with his plump little fingers, and then stared up stolidly in the patient creature's eyes.

"Git away from Daisy's legs!" shouted Ellen, somewhat sharply; and off toddled Sammy in the direction of the gate.

Meanwhile, Ellen, though busily engaged in milking, was thinking of many things; but not of the scene.

Her nature, which was not a little sensuous at the roots, was deliciously soothed by the sunshine that warmed her, and the scent of the grasses, and the breath of the cows, while the rhythmic spurting of the milk in the bucket was a sound which was always delightful to her ears. But Ellen, though busy at the moment with her hands, was far more busy in the recesses of her brain, trying to so far unravel life's threads as to find out whether she was glad or sorry that her widowhood had taken just the phase that it had.

In the interval, Sammy, with the adventuresomeness of childhood, had climbed on the gate, and was staring through the bars.

He was much interested in a bob-tailed cur that was running up the roadway through a tiny cloud of dust, and by-and-by was equally excited about a chicken which was picking up worms from a loose tuft of grass.

Suddenly the little fellow's eyes began to brighten. "I see my dada," he said softly to himself.

Then, raising his voice to quite a little shout, "I see my dada!" he triumphantly cried, and, leaning through the bars, began to clamour out excitedly, "Dada! Sammy want you! Me here, dada! here!"

"Wha's the matter?" asked Ellen, calling to him.

But Sammy was far too excited to heed her.

His father had heard the little shouter, and was coming towards him "all over smiles."

And just then, as Ellen turned her head, she saw someone raising the youngster and lifting him over the gate.

For a moment she thought her eyes deceived her: then her heart gave a gasp as if strangling, and it seemed as though her blood had ceased to run.

It was surely . . . unless she were dreaming . . . it was surely her husband . . . alive!

By this time the fact was accepted, and her life revolutionised once more; though the wonder and the sudden consternation were still all a-bubble in her brain.

Rising somewhat shakily from her milking-stool—for half the strength had gone from her limbs—she snatched up the still-crowling baby and hastily ran across the field, just as Sam pushed the rickety gate open and came up with Sammy in his arms.

There was a nervous twitching around the corners of her mouth, and a sharp, red flush on either of her cheeks as her husband approached her, searching her eyes; and Ellen felt as though her knees were unjointed, and her feet as heavy as if clogged with lead.

But whether it was joy or fear that she trembled with, the drither within her left her powerless to say.

"Well, Ellen," said Sam.

"Well, Sam," replied Ellen.

And there for a moment their greetings were stayed.

"My dada come home again!" shouted little Sammy, with his hands clasped excitedly around his father's neck; and thereupon he cuddled his face, in a child's fondling way, against Sam's.

"Thee'rt lookin' putty well for a widda," said Sam, glancing over his wife.

Ellen clasped her baby nervously to her, smiling with a wan, troubled smile.

"Still, it's ben a hard time weth us, too," she answered, as she watched her husband's eyes. "But how was 'ee saved arter all, Sam? An' where have 'ee ben all this while?"

"Have 'ee finished your milkin'?" asked her husband.

"No," answered Ellen, "not quite."

"Well, I'll tell 'ee about it while thee'rt milkin'."

And Ellen returned to her stool.

"Le' *me* howld th' baby," said the husband, setting down Sammy on the grass.

So Ellen gave the baby up to him, and resumed her interrupted task.

On which, seated near her on the grass, with the baby crawling over his knees, and Sammy playing hide-and-seek around him, Sam told her his fragmentary tale.

Ellen gave a kind of sigh as he finished.

"'Twar a wonderful escape!" she remarked.

"But why dedn' 'ee write home from 'Pollaiso? I needn' ha' broke up house ef I knaw'd."

Sam invented an excuse in an instant:

"I was ill all the time we was in port. Had th' fayver o' th' country," he explained to her; "it was raging there terrible at the time."

"But you might ha' got some wan to write for 'ee—just a line to le' me knaw you was alive."

"I was out o' me mind haaf th' time, and had hard work to pull through at all."

But Ellen was a little bit suspicious—distrustful by nature, perhaps.

"Why dedn' 'ee write a note, then, from Liverpool?"

"I wanted to surprise 'ee," he said.

"Oh!" rejoined Ellen significantly, rising and taking up her stool.

"What train ded 'ee come by?" she added.

Sam was taken a little aback.

"We got in about three o'clock," said he, with a sudden flush of colour in his face.

"I dedn' knaw th' down train come that time. I thought she got in about eleven."

"I cuddn' tell th' time to a minute; I went in to ha' somethin' to ayte, an' th' time slipped away raather quickly," quoth her husband, avoiding her eyes.

Ellen knew now that Sam must be lying, and her face became suddenly hard.

"Come through Newlyn, I s'pose, comin' up here?"

"Iss," said he, sullenly enough.

"Seed Maggie?"

"For a minute in passin'."

"S'pose 'twas she, then, who towld 'ee we was here?"

Ellen's face was so grey in its coldness, and her voice so inquisitively sharp, that Sam flung a taunt at her bitterly: "A fine welcome this, for a man! Wan would think thee wert questionin' a beggar!" and his face grew as hard as her own.

Ellen took up the milk-pail beside her: "Will 'ee carr-ry th' baby, or shall I?"

"I'll carr-ry th' cheldern," said her husband, taking little Sammy also in his arms; and then, without any further parley, they walked towards the gate and went home.

The grandmother's greeting was ambiguous. "So thee'rt come back agen?" she remarked.

"Iss; so it sims. But not wanted."

"Thee can settle that best weth thy wife."

"Muvver, esn' dada wanted?" asked Sammy.

"Iss, o' course. What a pack o' nonsense!" quoth Ellen, as she rested her pail. "I'll tidy up an' git around th' tay-things as soon as I've got rid o' thayse;" and she carried her stool and her milking-pail to the dairy in the rear of the house.

"'T'es a welcome I shaan't soon forgit," muttered Sam, with a darkening of the brows.

But Ellen was busy with the tea-things, and pretended not to hear what he said.

And the grandmother, watching them furtively, merely pursed her lips and kept still.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

" Good Luck is the gayest of all gay girls,
Long in one place she never will stay ;
Back from your brow she strokes the curls,
Kisses you quick, and flies away.

" But Madam Bad Luck more soberly comes,
And stays—no fancy has she for flitting—
Snatches of true-love songs she hums,
And sits by your bed and brings her knitting."

A DAY or two after Sam's return, Ellen and himself had a serious talk about his intentions and the ordering of their lives.

Sam had returned practically penniless ; and Ellen was equally penniless, of course. And though the grandmother had been passively willing to keep Ellen and the children, and share her house with them while Ellen was supposed to be a widow without means, she was far from willing to keep a son-in-law also ; in fact, to put it bluntly, she was showing signs of anxiety to be rid of her daughter and the brood of little children now the husband had returned to again assert his rights.

Ellen was not blind to this ill-concealed anxiety, nor was Sam altogether oblivious of its signs. But

their position at present was so incompatible with independence, that they had to "grin and bear it" in spite of themselves.

Still, Sam was growing restless at the hints and innuendoes which in speech or in gesture pursued him all day, and the talk between Ellen and himself at the moment was embittered as much by these as by anything else.

"We caan't remain here," his wife had been saying; "we've ayte out our welcome already, sim to me. I should like, too, to have a little house o' me awn agen. I would never ha' brok it up ef I knaw'd you was alive."

"How can we git a house without any money? We must think o' gittin' food before furniture," said he.

"Will 'ee go on th' fishin' agen?" questioned Ellen. "I should think thee could make more by shippin' in some vessel. Besides, they would give 'ee what they call an advaance."

"So thee want to git rid o' me as soon as I come back, do 'ee? Thee'rt jus' like thy mawther, keer for nowan but theeself!"

"I doan't knaw about that!" replied Ellen, rather warmly; "she've had me an' th' cheldern here nearly twelve months."

"Thee wedn' ha' come back to her ef thee'd had any sperrit. Why dedn' 'ee try to keep on th' house?"

"'Cause thee left me so in debt that I had to sell the furniture to pay off th' bills we'd run up, as it was."

"Well, thee might ha' managed somehow—gone out charin' or somethin'."

"I'd like to go out charin'!" she indignantly remarked. "Not for thee nor thy cheldern I wedn' do it, Sam Trewartha! But I'll go out in sarvice ef thee'll onnly keep th' cheldern."

"Will 'ee shut up thy clatter, an' begin to talk sense?"

"Ef thee'll shaw me th' way!—Go out charin'! I'd like to! A putty thing, too, to be towld by a man!"

"Better folks than thee have had to do so."

"Well, *I* never will, Sam Trewartha! not for thee nor thy cheldern—so there! Thee'd better ask me next to support 'ee! I wonder thee doan't," she remarked.

Sam glowered at her fiercely for a minute. "Thee'rt on thy own dunghill," said he, "so crawl away as loud as thee can."

Ellen's eyes began to glitter rather dangerously. "Thee'st nayther picked up money nor manners; what thee han't got thee caan't use," said she.

Sam took up the cup of tea before him and flung the contents in her face.

Ellen gave a scream and sprang up all dripping; then began to wipe her face and sob loudly, while Sam looked on grimly from his seat.

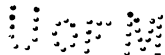
"I wish I'd never marr-ried 'ee!" sobbed Ellen. "I've repented of it hunderds o' times!"

"We was both of us fools," said her husband; "but I was th' biggest wan, I think."

"S'pose thee wish thee'd marr-ried Maggie?" sobbed Ellen.

"Ay, that I do!" he replied.

"I'm sure I wish thee'd done so," said Ellen, with hot cheeks and eyes hot and red.



"And I wish so, too," said her husband; "'tes th' biggest mistake I ever made."

Ellen locked her fingers tightly together, and began to stare into the fire.

And at that moment in came the mother with some newly-laid eggs in her hands.

"Wha's th' matter? Ben quarrellin', have 'ee?"

Ellen bit her lips, but said not a word.

"Look, dada! See! pitty fevver!" shouted Sammy, trotting in at the instant with little Nelly clinging to his hand. "Me found this out searchin' wiv' g'anny! Sammy give it dada!" said he.

Sam stooped down and kissed the little fellow, and lifted him up on his knee.

Whereat Nelly began to pull at his coat-sleeve: "Tiss me!" whimpered Nelly, "me too!"

But Ellen caught Nelly up defiantly, and nestled the child's face to hers.

"She's her muvver's pet, isn' she, darlin'?" quoth Ellen, showering kisses on her cheeks. "She wedn' layve her muvver, would she, petsie? Muvver's awn little loveliest girl!"

And Nelly, cuddling cosily to her, looked across at her brother well content.

"Still, this waan't wash th' breakfast-cups," said granny; "ef thee've finished, better clear away th' things."

So Ellen had to put down the little one and fetch a bowl in which to wash the cups; and as granny remained in the kitchen Sam soon after rose and went out.

"Had a quarrel, have 'ee?" asked the mother.

"He throwed a cup o' tay in me face!"

"Eh? what about?" asked the mother.

On which Ellen told her the tale.

"Better not 'zasperate un, Ellen," said the mother, when she heard it to the end; "the Trewarthas have got ugly tempers; an', of coorse, he's thy husband, come what may."

"Ef thee'll keep th' cheldern here," said her daughter, "I'll never live weth un agen. I'd a thousand times raather go in sarvice. . . ."

"We've settled that already," granny said. "I caan't keep th' cheldern at my years. Thee must drink as thee've brewed, as they say."

Ellen glanced at her mother in silence, and then went on with her work.

CHAPTER XIX.

SIDE BY SIDE.

“O birds that sing
Where the woodlands ring
With the restless beat of the Wind-god’s wing,
Flood land and sea,
With your notes of glee—
I love my love, and my love loves me !”

J. H. P.

As Sam slouched heavily out of the house a sense of failure and of disappointment seemed to sour the blood in him, and chill all his veins. Even his anger against Ellen was dulled or swallowed up in the chill; and as he walked he hung his head weakly, as one who is worsted by the world.

Homeless, except by permission of charity—for the grudging shelter which granny afforded him seemed little less to his thoughts—without a single penny in his pocket, and without a single hope in his heart, Sam’s thoughts had a strange, childish helplessness as he slouched through the village in the sun.

Unhappily, his friends and relations were all of them painfully poor, and as wholly unable to assist him as the birds fluting to him from the trees. It was only by a ruthless frugality—an economy that emasculated life and narrowed down the issues of

existence to a question of shelter and food—that his parents “held their heads above water,” and kept together what was called a *home*; to assist a married son and his children was absolutely out of their power.

Indeed, Lizzie was the only one of the family who was likely to have a few shillings to spare. Being in service, she had started a stocking for herself, but she was far too impulsive and prodigal to ever have much at command.

Ellen’s friends were equally poverty-stricken; all except granny herself, who managed, by the aid of her son, to eke out a meagre subsistence by farming a bit of rack-rented land. Uncle Ben was a mere village cobbler—a bachelor not from choice, but necessity, having always been too poor to marry, and being a hump-back to boot—and Phyllis, having recently made a nest for herself, had expenses enough of her own.

So that, look in what direction he would, Sam could see on the clouded horizon no single gleam of hope for his heart.

In this strait his thoughts turned to Maggie, who alone of all his friends and acquaintances had the wherewithal to help him if she would.

It was not without a sense of humiliation that he gave the thought harbourage at first; but, having once allowed it to whisper, it soon held his brain with its spell, till it seemed to him as though his salvation lay in Maggie, and Maggie alone.

Live with granny he felt that he could not; he would rather seek the workhouse at once. Besides, under granny’s chilling shadow Ellen’s nature was hardening every day. A man likes to feel that his

manhood has a certain charm even for his wife ; but Ellen was begining to despise him ; and this he was unable to endure. He was willing—nay, more, he was anxious—to again find a place in the boats, but he wanted to have a home around him in which he could garner associations, and to which thought could fasten its roots, and to gain this, thus penniless and helpless, he must sacrifice something, he knew. But to sacrifice pride at the outset? And, besides, what if Maggie should refuse? Sam was so chilled and beaten by despondency that he hung his head, sick and ashamed.

Yet all the while, however reluctantly, his steps took him nearer and nearer to the magnet towards which his thoughts turned.

Presently, as he loitered listlessly along, down a winding lane with tall brambly hedges, that had here and there a tree among their thorns, he was aware of a figure approaching which he instantly recognised as Maggie, and his blood all at once began to glow.

That a man in the maturity of his nature, and a woman in the maturity of hers, should respond to sentimental suggestions as promptly as a maiden and a youth, though unusual, is by no means surprising when one comes to strike an average of moods ; and though Sam, who was married and a father, could scarcely offer Maggie's excuse, disappointment should surely count for something in the matter of piquing one's thoughts ; and that marriage had sorely disappointed him was, unhappily, only too plain.

As he glanced now at Maggie coming towards him with a pretty little flush on her cheeks, and with

something like the eagerness of passion astir in her bright, restless eyes, Sam felt that, in spite of his marriage, he loved her right down to the root.

But so complex, after all, are our natures, that even the passion called *love* is a medley of many different motives—a stream fed by scores of tiny rills. And though Sam felt thus magnetised by Maggie—felt his blood sting him savagely at her glance—in the background he still loved his children, and was powerless to drop them from his thoughts; so that Maggie failed to hold his heart fully, and had far more to give than she could get.

“Who’d ha’ thought o’ mittin’ thee!” exclaimed Maggie.

“I come out for a stroll,” rejoined Sam.

“I was goin’ to git some crayme for a tart. I thought I’d call in to Treveneague.”

“Thee’ll git it there as likely as anywhere.”

“Iss, so I thought,” Maggie said.

Sam’s eyes wandered up and down the hedges, and then sought the branches overhead. Then he thrust his hands deep in his pockets and looked up at Maggie at last.

“Do’ee knaw any boat tha’s short-handed? I’m on th’ look-out for a job.”

“Ef thee wedn’ mind sailin’ weth my uncle, I could git’ee in his boat,” said she.

“I shall ha’ to go merely on wages.”

Maggie fidgeted her feet and blushed nervously. She glanced at him and hastily dropped her eyelids, and then glanced up at him again. Finally, after an effort, she was able to get out the words: “I could manage a net or two for’ee . . . ef thee wedn’ mind. . . . But p’r’aps thee wedn’ like it?”

... Yet, still, it would give 'ee a start." At each word she watched the effect on him, flushing and fidgeting the while, as if, instead of offering a favour, she were trying to extort one instead.

"I'm very much obliged to 'ee, Maggie; it 'ud help to make a man o' me agen," answered Sam, with a freshening of voice that assured her no harm had been done. "It's raather hard lines on a fella to be knacked ovver all of a heap, an' be left weth-out a home or a penny, an' all through no fau't of his awn "

"Iss, Sam, I'm heartily sorry for 'ee, an' I'll help 'ee in any way I can. That es, ef thee'll let me," she said.

"I wedn' mind a favour from *thee*, Maggie. I should know well enough it warn't grudged."

"That it wedn' be! I'll help 'ee, Sam, gladly! In any way thee like," Maggie said.

"An' yet I hardly like to lev' 'ee do it."

"*Do* le' me help 'ee!" she pleaded. "You could call it a loan, ef you like."

"No. It wedn' be feer to 'ee, Maggie. Specially arter th' way I've behaved."

"Ef you care th' layste bit for me, Sam . . ." began Maggie, and ended, blushing hotly, "lev' it wipe out owld scores between us both!"

Sam looked at her steadily for a second, her cheeks growing hotter the while; then he put his arms impulsively around her, and the bargain was sealed by a kiss.

"It shall be as thee please," answered Sam.

"Very well, then, it's settled," said Maggie. "I'll give 'ee th' money when thee like. Why not come to the shop for 't direkly? Better not do it under-

hand. We can trayte it as a mere friendly matter. Lev' th' folks look upon it as a loan."

"I'll lev' it entirely to thee, Maggie. Do just eszackly as thee please. Shall I call down, say, just arter denner?"

"Iss, I'd be glad ef thee wed."

So in this way the matter was settled, to the evident satisfaction of both.

CHAPTER XX.

NEEDS MUST . . . !

WHEN Sam left Maggie that afternoon, he had far more money in his pocket than he ever had handled before, and was free to purchase nets and other requisites for fishing, as well as such furniture as he wanted for the house, and still leave something unexpended, on which Ellen and the children might live until his first earnings should come in.

He accordingly made such arrangements as were necessary for securing a place for himself in a boat, but let the purchase of the furniture and the hiring of a house stand over until Ellen could look around for herself.

As he trudged home that evening, as the sun was declining, he was just a little wearied with the excitement of the day, and, caught in the physical reaction of his triumph, he began to almost dread the encounter with Ellen, which he knew would inevitably follow when she learned how the money had been procured.

Master though he was—and aware of it thoroughly—Sam still stood in fear of Ellen's temper, which was apparently incapable of being cowed, and was apt to be startlingly explosive with little care for any one's peace of mind—or, at any rate, Sam

summed it up in this way when ruminating on what might occur.

That Ellen disliked Maggie was so patent that he could not pretend to be ignorant of it, whatever might be gained by the pretence. But that she was justified in disliking her was quite another matter, he thought. And here he was aware of his vulnerability to the exasperating sting of Ellen's temper, if she chose to make it "war to the knife"; and therewith, to ease his irritation, he exploded in a brief burst of swearing, which let off a little waste steam, and to that extent lessened the strain which already was fretting his thoughts.

Was it not confoundedly annoying that when a man was doing his best for the comfort and happiness of his family, his wife should persistently pester him with objections to what he was doing, because, forsooth, she hated the party who was lending them all a helping hand? And as he thus argued with himself, Sam began to grow as virtuously indignant at the certain antagonism of Ellen as if he were playing the martyr for the sake of the children and her, and already felt a movement of hatred stirring in the roots of his heart.

In the cluster of trees at the back of the house the crows were exceptionally clamorous this evening, cawing and fussing as they settled for the night, and Sam, to whom the sights and sounds of the sea-line had become in the end a necessity of life, seemed to find the monotonous noise in the tree-tops as irritating now as it very well could be. He wanted to sniff the odour of the seaweed and the smell of the tar and the nets, and as he gazed abroad upon the meadows, with their hayricks and cattle and trees,

a sudden rush of passionate longing to be leaning against the cliff-rail this evening, looking down on the boats in the harbour and listening to the croon of the waves, seemed to master his thoughts so imperiously that his veins swelled with anger at the bondage into which he had drifted through his wife, and he sullenly entered the cottage, prepared to find everything an offence.

Ellen was upstairs with the children, putting Nelly and Sammy to bed, and the grandmother was out in the meadow collecting the washing from the hedge; so that Sam, as he entered the kitchen, found no one there ready to greet him, except the baby crying in the cradle, and the cat purring softly on the hearth.

The tea-things were still on the table, with fragments of the meal strewn about; but it was evident to Sam, at a glance, that no one had chosen to wait for him, and his tea would have still to be prepared.

Aware of Ellen's presence upstairs by the sound of her feet on the *planchen* and the rather sleepy babble of the children, who were now being tucked-in in bed, Sam shouted up impatiently to her: "Come down an' qua'at th' cheeld!"

"All right! I'm comin'," shouted Ellen, and was evidently preparing to descend, when Sammy began to call upon his "muvver," whining for "somefin to jink."

"I'll bring 'ee up some in a minute," answered Ellen, now trudging downstairs.

But Sammy was not to be pacified, and kept querulously calling all the while. On which Ellen was turning back to quiet him, when Sam began

bawling again : " Darn 'ee ! are 'ee comin' down, up there ? Do 'ee mayne me not to have any tay ? "

" Be qua'at ! I must go to your faather," Ellen snappishly called to the child ; and leaving the little fellow wailing, she came down to the kitchen to Sam.

" Caan't 'ee wait while I git, th' cheeld some water ? " quoth Ellen rather crossly to her husband.

" I want me tay ! "

" Well, git th' water, an' take up a cup to th' cheeld. "

" I shaan't. I'm tired out as it es. "

" Well, it esn' with workin'," said his wife. " There's more tired out beside theeself ; but it's no good my sittin' down to grunt. "

" I want me tay, I tell 'ee ! " he reiterated.

" Well, thee'll have it in a minute," Ellen answered, and began to prepare it as she spoke.

By this time the child in the cradle had finally cried itself quiet ; but Sammy kept calling at intervals, until Ellen, having given Sam his supper, took a cup of water up to the bairnie, and kissed him and " tuned " away to him till she managed to soothe him to sleep.

While Ellen was upstairs with Sammy, granny came in with the clothes, and when Ellen returned to the kitchen, she found Sam and her mother drifting guardedly into a fragmentary talk.

" Sam have had a stroke o' luck," said the mother ; " got a big loan from wan of his friends. "

" Which wan ? " asked Ellen rather sharply, with a sudden suspicion in her mind.

" Better ask un theeself," said the mother, " ef thee'rt goin' to be so snappish about it. " And she

took down her knitting from the shelf, and began to draw the needles from the sheath.

"Who've ben lendin' 'ee money?" Ellen asked him, with a curious ring in her voice.

"Why, th' onnly wan who've got it to lend."

"S'pose tha's Maggie thee mayne, then?"

"O' coorse."

"So thee've ben takin' money from Maggie Tren-with?"

"She've lent me enough to make a start on."

"I thought thee wert more of a man," answered Ellen, with quiet contempt. "I never thought thee'd lev' a girl pinshon 'ee. What'll folks say, do 'ee think?"

Sam glanced at her, glowering wrathfully. "Le' them say what they like; I doan't keer."

"I s'pose not, or else thee wedn' done it. Thee'rt a cureyous sort o' man, I should fancy. Not many like 'ee, I think." Ellen spoke with a concentrated bitterness, clutching hard at a chairback the while.

"Wed 'ee ha' th' man lev' 'ee to starve?" asked the mother, looking up from her knitting, but never once pausing in her work.

"I'd raather starve a thousand times ovver."

"Starvin' wance would be quite enough, I think," quoth the mother, knitting quietly the while.

"So *thee* take his part, do 'ee, too?"

"I arn't takin' no *parts* that I knaw of; but thee got to live somehow," said granny, "an' thee caan't live wethout th' maynes, can 'ee? Ef thee can, I'd be glad to knaw how."

"But th' mayneness of borrowin' from *she*!"

"Why from she more than anywan else?"

"Well, I'll never touch a penny of it, anyhow!"

"I'm thinkin' thee'll ha' to, me cheeld."

"I never will!" Ellen cried passionately.

"Well, we shall see," granny said.

Happily, or unhappily (who shall say which?), social relations in the majority of instances are regulated less on the basis of morals than on that of the marketable value of conduct—the expedient being taken as the standard rather than what is called the right. And though granny had not formulated the question in this way, it was on lines such as these she had instinctively settled it, when Maggie's loan to Sam became a matter of debate.

But Ellen—who was stung to the quick by the bargain which her mother thus cynically seemed to approve, and against which she felt herself powerless to battle, if her husband and her mother thus stood side by side—was unable to control the anger within her, and flung her taunts recklessly now at them both.

"You ought to be ashamed to uphould un in this thing! Do 'ee want to have your daughter made a laughing-stock for all? Ef faather was alive," she cried excitedly, "he'd never le' me come to this pass: ha' me husband borrow money from a woman so degraded that she'll lev' a marr-ried scoundrel come a-coortin' when he like?"

"Ef thee say anawther word," cried her husband, rising at her, "I'll smash in thy jaws for 'ee! Darn me ef I doan't!"

Ellen stood up before him with her black eyes defiant, though the woman's heart within her quailed in spite of her pride.

"It's madness talkin' this way," said the mother

to Ellen; "he's thy husband; an' he's doin' his best for 'ee both."

"Take th' cheldern, an' le' me go in sarvice!"

"Go in sarvice, ef thee wust," said her husband; "but so sure as thee do, my fine lady, I'll ha' Maggie to keep me house, there!"

Ellen looked at him steadily for a moment, then sat down and burst into tears.

"'Tes all your fau't, mawther," sobbed Ellen, while the hot tears were stinging her lids. "You might ha' stood up for me, mawther. 'Tes all your fau't, happen what will."

"An' wha's goin' to happen?" asked the mother.

"There waan't be much happiness for any of us," sobbed her daughter, now wiping her eyes. "But I'll live through it, s'pose, like the rest." And she rose and went out of the room.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHANCE AND CHANGE.

IN spite of her bitter repugnance to making a new start in life on money supplied by her rival, Ellen found herself compelled to submit, and tried to bear her cross of humiliation with as little show of feeling as she could.

But the relations between herself and her husband were never again as they had been, before he thus brutally condemned her to a penance so galling to her pride; and she definitely closed her heart against him, living with him in sullen companionship for the children's sake, not for her own.

Meanwhile others besides Ellen and her husband found the problems of conduct perplexing, and wished the irrevocable *yesterday* were again within grasp as *to-day*.

In Penzance, and apart from her parents—who, though scarcely what one might call its conscience, were at least the police of her life—Lizzie tasted the pleasures of freedom to a somewhat intoxicating extent.

In Newlyn she had grown up from girlhood with the youngsters who were looking around for wives, and had little of the piquancy of novelty to either offer or receive. But here in Penzance she had the attractions of a stranger, and found the same in those

with whom she came in contact, so that though she ostensibly held to George in the background, she ran about freely with any one she could.

Her experiences, in fact, had been too varied for her fancy to immediately domesticate itself and accept its choice with that sense of inevitableness which pertains to the election of a first love. She had tasted the perilous sweets of contrast, until her appetite had become so dulled and jaded that it would require more than an ordinary effort for her to keep true to George with such uncalculating *naïveté* that he should find no cause for jealousy or distrust. Her fancy, indeed, was continually wandering—sidling now towards this one, now towards that—and as George was by no means blind to her vagaries, their bond was necessarily of the loosest kind.

Moreover, George, who was young like herself, was by no means anxious to be tied to a wife, having neither the money nor the inclination to set up house and drowse beside the hearth. Being of a rather restless disposition, he had once shipped as an ordinary seaman on board one of the steamers which, during the winter, convey fish from Penzance to the Mediterranean, and the world he had thus obtained a glimpse of had permanently haunted the young fellow's thoughts. It was true that after a couple of voyages he had left the vessel and returned to Newlyn, disgusted for the moment with his temporary choice; but no sooner was he back among the too-familiar faces, than the world that lay beyond the little hamlet again began to tempt and attract his thoughts; and though he remained among the fishermen for the present, the ties that bound

him were ties of tow. The life of London had especially fascinated him—notwithstanding that he saw little more of the Metropolis than Aldgate and Whitechapel, and the neighbourhood of the Docks—and he was perpetually telling about the trains and tramcars, the costers and the shoeblacks, and the marvellous shop-fronts, the music-halls, and other such showy entertainments, and the ever-moving crowds that enlivened the streets, till his hearers at times caught a touch of the infection, and longed to see the great hive he praised thus excitedly, and all the strange wonders that pertained to its life.

But for Lizzie this attraction, though at times she succumbed to it, was a thing which she secretly detested in her heart, since, because of it, her sweetheart never came to close quarters, and, though willing to be a lover, fought shy of being more.

While matters were in this unsettled state with his sister, Sam Trewartha had again resumed his place among his neighbours; and yet not exactly the place he had occupied previous to the untoward accident which had sent him adrift across the world. There was noticeable in the attitude of his neighbours towards him a little less frank cordiality, he thought; and occasionally he was aware that on joining a group of loungers, he seemed to cause a hitch in the gossip, which was equally significant and strange.

As embarrassing, too, in its way was the rather timid friendliness of manner with which Maggie now would greet him when they met; a friendliness patent to every one, though the timidity might only strike himself.

That Maggie attracted him as no one else did—

had, in fact, that peculiar suggestiveness for fancy which a "first love" often has *when it is lost*—was something Sam willingly admitted to himself, when his thoughts at rare intervals took an introspective turn. But if this attraction would land him in a dilemma—would result in curtailing the comforts he cared for—Sam felt he would rather lose a luxury so piquant, than for *its* sake imperil the more needful things of life. He was willing to win and wear Maggie's heart in secret; but he scarcely cared to openly flaunt his theft in the street. More especially as, at present, he was decidedly prospering—the fishing season proving a notable success—and after the bitter draught of poverty he had tasted, the wine of prosperity was grateful indeed. Though even prosperity would lose its zest for him if his neighbours should continue to look askance at him, as he fancied more than one had been doing of late. So that ultimately it would seem that the problem of conduct resolved itself into the crucial question whether little Maggie Trenwith or Miss Respectability should have her name coupled with his by the world. And Sam, so susceptible to chivalrous sentiments, was thinking out the matter in his characteristic way.

That Sam, now her money had reinstated him in his position, was finding himself besmirched with a slime of innuendoes, was gradually becoming as patent to Maggie as was the corresponding fact that her assistance to him was being used as the basis of slanders against herself.

But the girl had not only pride, but courage; and secure, as she thought herself, in Sam's affection, she felt for the petty stings of gossip a certain self-

contained, haughty contempt. All the world on one side and love on the other—so long as the love implied nothing belittling, or from which thought instinctively felt compelled to recoil—seemed to Maggie Trenwith a position to be proud of. What gift in the world is so precious as love? All the other gifts of daily intercourse were as veriest chaff when compared with this!

But when she began to perceive in Sam Trewartha a change which implied that the opinion of the world was more and dearer to him than anything else, the girl's heart contracted with sudden anguish; and she went about as one who is wounded by a friend and finds all the flavour taken out of life.

While this interplay of passions, of hopes and desires, was weaving the various patterns of their lives, the group of characters we have been casually watching found the world was moving as well as themselves.

After having stayed in Newlyn now for nearly two years, George began to show signs of an unaccountable restlessness. He was especially shiftily in his moods towards Lizzie, who of late had completely changed her tactics towards him, being now as timidly deprecating in her manner as before she had been defiant and saucily self-willed.

But George, though she now was so amiable towards him—showed, in fact, a touch of servility at times which was not without a grim suggestiveness of its own—would by no means play the satisfied lover, but seemed like one anxiously on the watch to escape from some vaguely-suggested danger, some possible peril ahead.

One day he was missed from his place in the

boats; and it was found that he also was missing from home.

The next day, and the next, he failed to put in an appearance. And ultimately it was discovered that he had made his way to Falmouth, and had there shipped on board a vessel bound for some out-of-the-way port in Japan.


Except his parents—who, by dint of much pestering, had managed to squeeze out of him an occasional shilling over and above what they charged him for his board—no one seemed to very much notice George's absence; and Lizzie heard the news without comment or remark.

For many months Lizzie had been very irregular in the visits she had paid to her parents in Newlyn; but after George went, instead of being irregular, she simply ceased coming to Newlyn at all.

Some of the neighbours sarcastically explained her absence on the ground that she was growing ashamed of her relations, being puffed up with pride like Tom Treloar's dog. While others hinted darkly that perhaps she had her reasons; though it certainly did seem suspicious (they would add) that she kept away from every one who knew her as if afraid of showing her face.

Once or twice Lizzie's sisters, when marketing in Penzance, called to see her at the house where she was in service; but her behaviour was so strange, and so unusually ungracious, and she appeared to be so anxious to quickly get rid of them, that they went away very decidedly "tiffed."

The consequence was that Lizzie for a month or two had been practically lost sight of by her friends, who scarcely knew, except by mere hearsay, whether she was dead or alive.



CHAPTER XXII.

OVERHEARD IN THE MARKET-HOUSE.

ONE fine Thursday, towards the end of October, Ellen went to Penzance to make her weekly purchases, and took her way, as usual, to the butter-market, which to-day was so busy and crowded that it was with difficulty she could manage to get along through the motley groups crowding the place.

The sellers, seated on long low forms, with their baskets of eggs or butter on their knees, and with chickens clucking and ducks quacking from the baskets that were stowed away under the forms; the buyers, with their natty housewifely looks, bargaining or gossiping with equal vivacity; the noise of feet and the clatter of tongues; the picturesque diversity of faces and costumes, and the equally picturesque diversity of hues—these produced altogether an *ensemble* so exhilarating that the scene caught the fancy ere one was aware. And Ellen as she elbowed her way through the groups—chaffering and bargaining as she made her way along—though she never once thought of its colour and animation, was attracted by the scene without well knowing why, and felt that to miss her weekly visit to the market would be losing a choice pleasure out of her life.

Presently Ellen came to the ruddy farmer's wife from whom she was in the habit of purchasing her butter, and while she was chatting and discussing the price, she happened to overhear at her elbow a bit of gossip which so much surprised her that she ceased her talk to hear it out.

An elderly countrywoman, who was seated on a form with a basketful of butter resting on her knees, was talking to a neatly-dressed, rosy-faced servant girl, who had come to the market for some butter and eggs. "Where's that brisk young woman who used to fetch th' butter?" the countrywoman asked, while counting out the change; "she weth th' black hair an' eyes I mayne, my dear."

"Lizzie Trewartha do'ee mayne?" asked the girl.

"Iss, I b'leeve Lizzie was her name," quoth the woman.

"Oh, she's in trouble; she've left," said the girl.

"In trouble, eh, my dear?" asked the woman with a peculiar elevation of the brows.

"Iss, poor thing!" answered the girl, as she lowered her voice to a whisper; "got in trouble—had to go to the workhouse—she's in the infirmary there now."

"Es th' cheeld livin'?"

"Iss," was the answer.

"What a pity!" said the woman, with a sigh. "Such a bright little thing as she was! Do they knaw who's th' faather?" she asked.

"They don't exactly knaw," said the girl; "but her sweetheart was a fisherman from Newlyn, an' he ran off to say the other day . . ."

"Ay! the owld tale!" quoth the countrywoman. "Well, I'm sorry for her, any way," said she.

"Es it Lizzie Trewartha you're talkin' about?" asked Ellen, now addressing the girl.

"Iss, mum, her name is Trewartha. Her folks live in Newlyn, so they say."

"And she's up in th' workhouse infirmary?"

"Iss, mum; she've ben there a week."

"Thaank 'ee. I'm much obliged to 'ee. I know her friends in Newlyn very well."

And Ellen put her butter in her basket and thoughtfully made her way out.

When Ellen told the news to her husband, he at first refused to credit the tale. But when the particulars were repeated, and he had to accept the fact at last, he broke out into angry denunciations of his sister, and almost frightened Ellen by the cruelty of his wrath.

"I wish she was dead, Satan take her! I'd raather see her stretched out afore me weth her cussed throt cut from ear to ear! I'd spit in her faace ef I mit her!—I wed—strike me dead ef I wedn'!" he raved in his impotent wrath, while Ellen, alarmed at his vehemence, merely looked on and held her tongue.

"I hope she waan't recover," he growled. "'Twould be a good riddance to us all! Ef she lives she'll onnly be a disgrace to us. Faancy her here weth her brat! We could never howld our heads up in Newlyn. They'd all'ys cast it up in our teeth. I'd strangle her ef I could do it. Why dedn' she drown herself when she knaw'd it? 'Twould ha' ben th' best thing for us all."

Ellen went about her household work quietly, leaving him to fume to himself.

Presently he burst out again:

“S’pose ’tes knawn all ovver the town? By this time they’ve all heerd it, s’pose?”

“I think not,” said Ellen, rather coldly. “But o’ coorse I doan’t know,” she added quickly, unwilling to spare him a pang.

Sam rose and paced up and down the kitchen, swearing and stamping in his rage.

“Thee shaan’t go to see her,” he said to Ellen.

“I’m sure I doan’t want to,” Ellen said.

Then Sam turned his anger upon Ellen.

“Iss! thee’rt rejoicin’ in it, s’pose! ’Twill be somethin’ thee can cast up agen’ us. But onnly thee try it!” he said threateningly. “Iss! thee jus’ try it, tha’s all!”

“Well, wait till I want to,” said Ellen, scarcely lifting her head from her work; for the sparkle that lighted up her eyes and the crease of satisfaction round her mouth would have angered him (had he but seen them) far more than any spoken word.

“I’m goin’ to see ef mawther have heerd it,” quoth Sam, slouching out of the house.

Ellen smiled to herself somewhat grimly, and went on with her work without remark.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MAGGIE AND SAM.

It was soon known over the village that Lizzie "was up in Maddern workhouse," a mother before she was a wife, and the shrill tittle-tattle of the gossips rose loudly indeed against her sin.

But Maggie felt her pity stirred deeply at the treatment meted out to the girl, and when she found that Lizzie was deserted in her sorrow, not one of her friends condescended to visit her, Maggie made up her mind to befriend her and call at the workhouse forthwith.

But before she paid her visit to Lizzie she determined to have an interview with Sam, and see if he would charge her with a message that might make Liz a little less forlorn in view of her desertion by her friends.

It was in the lane adjoining Tolcarne that Sam and Maggie ultimately met.

Maggie had been out picking blackberries, which grew in abundance round the fir-patch that crested the hill near the carn, and was just turning into the lane which wound down the slope to the village, when she chanced to meet Sam trudging home.

When the first words of greeting were over, Sam felt half inclined to sneak off and leave Maggie to go on alone. He hated the thought of entering the

village with Maggie at his side just at present, when the gossips were so busy with the affairs of his family in that miserable matter of Lizzie and her child. But he had not the courage to openly "cut" her, and in decency, seeing the terms they were on, he could not merely pass her with a greeting, though this he would have liked to have done.

So he offered to carry her basket—which was not so very heavy, it is true—and when she demurred to his doing so, he merely walked on by her side.

Presently, after various commonplace remarks about the quantity of berries in the hedges, and the rather muddy state of the lane, Maggie turned the talk round to his sister in a timid, apologetic way.

"I shall make a big pie out o' thayse," remarked Maggie, looking down at the berries—the open basket showing the fruit—"and I onnly wish Lizzie could share it; she'd like a good piece, I'll be bound—so fond as she es of it, too."

Sam winced at the untoward allusion, but, though he looked glum, he held his peace.

"I'm goin' up to see Lizzie to-morra," added Maggie in a tentative way, as if she were putting a question to which she expected a reply.

"Oh . . . thee 'rt, are 'ee?" said Sam, and he nervously began to pull his beard.

"Have 'ee any message for her?" she asked.

"Iss," said Sam, spluttering in his anger. "Now she's there, tell her to stay there! Tell her so from me, ef thee like!"

"Caan't 'ee say nawthin' kinder than that? She's thy sister."

"An' what ef she es? She've disgraced us. I wish she was dead."

Maggie gave him a strange, wistful glance; one might say she was pleading with her eyes.

But Sam, who was wholly without a spark of imagination, never dreamt for a moment of tracking her moods. It was amply sufficient for a nature so selfish to concentrate its thoughts on finding utterance for itself. So he blurted out, not over-civilly:

"I'm s'prised at thee takin' her part. I thought thee'd think more o' theeself"—an argument which, as we know, seemed the essence of wisdom to Sam.

"We caan't all'ys be thinkin' of ourselves," rejoined Maggie, still with the same wistful look in her eyes.

"An' why not?" quoth Sam. "Wha's to hender us?"

"Oh, of course, nawthin'," answered Maggie, with just a suspicion of sarcasm acidly tinging her voice.

"Wan must keep as respectable as their neighbours ef they want to live in paice, sim to me. An' how can a man howld 'es head up, weth 'es sister in th' gutter?" he growled.

"So tha's th' way you spayke o' poor Lizzie."

"A fat lot o' pity she desarves! I wish she was dead, Satan taake her! I'd chuck her to un weth me awn hands."

Maggie calmly turned over the berries and picked out a handful to eat.

"Will 'ee ha' some o' thayse, Sam?" she asked.

"Doan't mind ef I do," he replied.

Maggie gave him a handful of choice ones, and they walked on, eating the fruit.

"'Tes a poor look-out, this, for a fella, when he's

tryin' his best to git on. When she knaw'd she was gittin' into trouble, why dedn' she do away weth herself?"

"Then you doan't pity Lizzie in th' layste, Sam?"

"O' coorse I doan't pity her," he said.

"But you'll help her to make a fresh start when she's out o' th' union, I s'pose?"

"That I waan't!" he emphatically replied. "Le' they who got her into the trouble help her out, ef she want help," said he.

"You're not very generous to her," began Maggie, but was cut short by Sam.

"This esn' a case o' generosity; I must think o' meself," he rejoined. "I shaan't never awn her no more; she must sink or swim just as she can."

"Well, I'm goin' in to see her to-morra . . ."

"What!" he cried, simply aghast. "Goin' to see her arter what I've ben sayin'?"

"Why not?" replied Maggie, very quietly, picking over the berries as she spoke.

"Well, I'm 'stonished at 'ee—tha's all," said Sam.

Maggie now had some berries in her mouth, so she merely glanced scrutinisingly at him, and went on eating the while.

"Thee'rt sayin' this o' purpose to taise me. Thee surely waan't do it," said he.

"Why not?" queried Maggie, still eating.

"I've towld 'ee why not," he rejoined.

"You're hard to your sister, Sam," said Maggie. "I never had a brother meself, but I thought they was kinder to their sisters. I'm sorry you've said what you have."

"Tha's nawthin' to th' purpose," quoth Sam. "Thee never had a brother, as thee say, so thee

caan't be espected to onderstand them. Thee'd better be guided by me."

"Well, we needn' discuss it no farther," answered Maggie, in a rather wearied voice. "You've had your chaance, Sam, to do your duty."

"An' I'm doin' it," he sturdily answered.

But to this Maggie made no reply.

At the bridge, near the entrance to the village, Sam suddenly happened to remember that he had to call at Zimmerman's cot, which was situated farther up the lane, so, apologising to Maggie for leaving her, he quietly sidled off.

As Maggie walked home through the village, with her basket of berries on her arm, she had plenty of time to think soberly over Sam's exhibition of his grain; but her thoughts had a rather painful quality—seemed to hurt her and actually make her wince—so she finally tried to free herself from them by sauntering on, and gossiping with the housewives who stood knitting on the doorsteps in the sun. In this way Maggie managed to find an anodyne for the pain that was gnawing at her heart; but she was unable to root it out wholly; and, indeed, hardly hoped to, as yet.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LIZZIE FINDS A FRIEND.

It is a cheerless place, the workhouse, even at the best of times. To see the flotsam and jetsam of the community gathered together in a prison-like building, with the malaria of restraint infecting the air, is enough to give one a moral shiver and slow the beat of the healthiest pulse. And the inmates themselves have the pathos of expectancy so visibly imprinted on their features that it hurts one to look in their eyes.

Only here and there an age-withered being, or one sorely worsted in the battle of life, has that look of flaccid and sinewless resignation which accompanies the acceptance of an irreversible defeat, and will tell you frankly that, hoping for nothing, they are unfeignedly glad of a refuge where chance and change come not.

But the young rebel at the restraint and the stigma, and the anger gathers and burns in their eyes.

And Lizzie as she lay between the dingy sheets, with her puny infant sleeping beside her, glared up at Maggie with a smouldering passion that rather touched her visitor's pride.

But Maggie had been sharply disciplined to patience, and was by no means so shallow-natured as to let pride stultify her will ; besides, she had the

vice of generosity to an extent that crippled her at times ; so she let Lizzie's hostile glances pass as if unfelt.

Coming out of the sunlit world into the pallid nakedness of the ward, with its rows of lives pathetically overthrown, Maggie was inclined to be unduly tender rather than unduly critical or harsh ; and she took her seat at Lizzie's bedside with an air of timid deprecation that disarmed poor Lizzie in spite of herself.

Half ashamed of, and yet, in the last resort, rejoicing in, the full tide of health that was flooding her veins, Maggie set down her basket on the young mother's counterpane, and prepared to display the little delicacies she had brought.

"Who sent 'ee here?" asked Lizzie ; "was it mawther, or wan o' th' girls?"

Maggie busied herself about the eatables, trying to shirk a reply.

"'Twas mawther, 'spose ; warn't it?" asked Lizzie.

"I'm afraid I musn' tell 'ee a' untruth," said Maggie, in a shame-faced kind of way. "The fact es I wasn' sent by anywan. I thought I'd call to see 'ee out o' neighbourliness ; thinkin' thee must find it raather dull."

Lizzie's face flushed and swelled with strong passion, and her eyes became angrily bright.

"Ded any of them knaw thee was comin'?"

"I mentioned it to Sam," Maggie said.

"An' what ded 'a say?" questioned Lizzie, half rising now in the bed.

"Nawthin' in partic'lar," answered Maggie. "He was out o' sorts 'bout somethin', I think."

Lizzie leaned her flushed face on her hand, with her black eyes glittering and burning, and her red lips parched and dry, and seemed to be trying at the moment to pierce into Maggie's brain.

"Tell me what he said!" demanded Lizzie, in her quick, impatient way.

"There's nawthin' to tell, that I know of. He was vexed an' a little bit contrairy, an' tha's about all," Maggie said.

"Then he've changed sence I know'd un," said Lizzie in a tone full of biting contempt. "But I quate onderstand," she added wearily. "I thought 'twould be that way weth all. Not a word or a message from anywan—well, I shall live through it, s'pose." And she leaned back her head on the pillow with a strange wanness thinning her face.

"Waan't 'ee try to ayte a bit o' this?" asked Maggie, producing a cake. "Or a few o' thayse?" she added rather wistfully, holding up a big bunch of grapes.

"I han't got no appetite," said Lizzie. "I'm tired out. I'd like to go to slaip."

"Well, I'll layve the basket here by your bedside."

"No . . . better not. I shaan't ayte them. Workhouse fare es good enough for mē."

"You might faancy them by-and-by," quoth Maggie. "Anyhow, I'll layve them," she said.

Lizzie felt no inclination to answer; she merely lay back and closed her eyes.

"I should like to kiss the baby, ef you'll let me?"

"He's slaipin'," was the surly response.

"But thee'll le' me have a peep at un, waan't 'ee?"

Lizzie suddenly opened her eyes and scrutinised Maggie for a second, then turned and glanced down at her babe.

"Ef he's *nobody's cheeld*," she said fiercely, "he's his mawther's flesh an' blood all the same;" and the young mother bent above her infant and passionately kissed his little face.

Maggie leaned over, trembling and glowing. "What a lovely little darlin'!" she exclaimed.

Lizzie moved the clothes back a little farther, displaying the infant's red face.

On which Maggie, bending lovingly over him, kissed his bonny cheeks more than once.

The baby began to get restless; he gave a little sigh and woke up.

"Oh, *do le' me hold him!*" cried Maggie.

"Be keerful!" said Lizzie, acquiescing.

And Maggie had the bairn in her arms.

'Twas a light little armful, after all—very different, thought Maggie, to Sammy, who was twice as fat and plump as a babe. But the wee bairn was born to an inheritance so painfully empty of happiness, that Maggie felt a strange yearning tenderness swallow up every other thought, and kissed and caressed the little fellow till she warmed Lizzie's heart through and through.

Through the curtainless windows of the ward the sunshine was streaming in faintly in a long, hazy film, in which the dust-motes were ceaselessly dancing to and fro; and Maggie held the bairn in the sun-track till its little eyes blinked and shut close and it snuggled off to sleep in her arms.

Lizzie turned on her pillow to watch them, and her heart swelled with tenderness and love.

She felt sure now that Maggie had not visited her to merely be a spy on her nakedness, but had come out of pure human kindness; and the young mother's eyes dimmed with gratitude, so warm was the thaw in her heart.

When Maggie handed back the sleeping infant and gave its tiny face a last kiss, Lizzie said to her, colouring a little :

"I'm much obliged to 'ee for comin'. An' I thaank 'ee for all the things thee've brought. I shaan't soon forgit thy kindness, Maggie. Thee'rt th' awnly wan I've seen sence it happened . . ." And Lizzie broke down and began to cry.

Maggie seated herself on the bedside and began to whisper soothingly to her, saying all sorts of heart-healing things, till at last Lizzie ceased her fit of sobbing and grew a little quiet again.

"As soon as you can come out," said Maggie, "I'll pay for a room for 'ee somewhere until you can git back your stringth. An' ef you'd like to go out in sarvice, we can pay for th' keep of th' baby, an' I 'spect I can git 'ee a place. I got a cousin somewhere in Truro; she could manage it for me, I should think. An' when th' baby gits a bit bigger he can come an' live weth me, ef thee like. I'd be kind to un, that thee may be sure."

Lizzie's heart was overflowing with gratitude, and she poured out a torrent of thanks, which Maggie did her best to arrest. But Lizzie, impulsive and excited, must needs ease her swelling heart somehow, so she chose the one channel at command.

"Thee've done me more good than th' minster—though he've jawed away at me enough, weth 'es gashly owld tales, th' gayte chuckle-head! an' dedn'

do a dinyun o' good. An' I'll never forgit what thee've done for me—never, so long as I live!”

Maggie took her hand in hers and held it kindly.

“Well, doan't excite yourself now. I'll call agen next week, for sartin, an' bring 'ee a robe for th' baby, which we'll keep for un 'tell you come out.”

“Oh, Maggie, how good thee 'rt to me! I never thought it of 'ee!” Lizzie cried.

“Hush! there's the baby gittin' restless. I should like to kiss un—may I?—'fore I go.”

“Iss, to be sure!” replied Lizzie, uncovering the puny face again.

After lingeringly kissing the little one, Maggie bent down and kissed Lizzie too.

“Now, good-bye, dear,” Maggie said gently; “see thee'rt better by th' time I come agen.”

Lizzie choked down a sob with an effort, and managed to whisper, “Good-bye!”

And then, throwing back a kiss to her, Maggie made her way out of the ward.

CHAPTER XXV.

TOWING IN A DERELICT.

WHEN Lizzie was able to leave the workhouse Maggie was there waiting to accompany her, and they set off together for the quiet little lodging which Maggie had engaged at Chy'ndour, the extreme eastern suburb of Penzance.

It was quite an hour's walk from the workhouse to Chy'ndour, and Lizzie was as yet by no means strong; so they arranged to share the carrying of the baby between them, Maggie at her own request taking him first.

Although it was now on the verge of November—October having only a day or two to run—the sun was shining brightly, though not over-warmly, among the thin woolly clouds that were dappling the sky, and the long slope of ridgy undulations that extend from Madron to Penzance looked still green and pleasant in the distance, though close at hand the grass was rather thin.

But the vast plain of deeply-blue waters stretching out to the distant horizon between the twin horns of the bay—it was this Lizzie's eyes dwelt on fondly and reverted to again and again; and when she saw the old familiar Mount, with the blue waters ringing its base, the earth-love stirred in her so strongly that she felt she could weep with delight. The weeks she had spent in the workhouse had been

an imprisonment indeed, and, coming out now in the sunshine—with the nightmare behind her at last—Lizzie felt that the dear familiar scenery was a veritable part of her life.

But there were many things to think of at present besides the sun and the sea, for Maggie was detailing the arrangements she had made in the room in Chy'ndour, and Lizzie began to think, with a shiver, of what her new life might be like when she came to move about among the townsfolk with the evidence of her shame in her arms.

The country-folk who stared now in passing—though with nothing unkindly in their stare—made the young mother wince with their glances and colour to the tips of her ears. And she felt such a dread of the townsfolk—some of whom might know her by sight—that instead of going down to Chy'ndour by way of Hea Moor and Causewayhead, she begged, though the lanes were so muddy, that they might covertly steal to her lodging “through Hea Lane an’ down Chy'ndour Coombe.”

Maggie, in view of the mud, would have much preferred the highways and streets; but she sympathised with poor Lizzie's sensitiveness, and, of course, agreed to do as she wished.

So they trudged on slowly down the deep-rutted lane, picking their way as daintily as possible, but getting well splashed in spite of their pains.

To carefully carry the baby and at the same time hold up her dress, Maggie found was as much as she could do; but she would not burden Lizzie with the infant, though his mother asked to take him more than once.

The tax upon her energies, however, put a stop to

conversation for the present, and they trudged on together without much talking, though laughing now and then at their little mishaps.

The wind was sounding rather drearily in the tree-tops—for great bare branches overarched the lane where the trees rose high above the hedgerows of thorns—and the cry of the sea on the beach at Chy'ndour was occasionally wafted up on the breeze; and these, combined with the chill, dank shadows that lay across the puddles and mud of the lane, began at last to have a rather depressing influence on the young mother wearily trudging towards a home which she knew was unfurnished with memories and equally empty of love.

Sensuous by nature, and gregarious by instinct, Lizzie needed the warmth of human fellowship far more than little Maggie Trenwith, who had twice as much steel in her blood; and the new life her thoughts pictured for her seemed so naked and cheerless and bare, that Lizzie's lips unconsciously drooped, and a mist began to gather in her eyes. But she kept her face turned away from Maggie, that the latter might not question its signs, and indulged in her melancholy imaginings till her lids became swollen with tears.

"If she died, she supposed they'd forgive her; and George would be sorry for her, too. P'raps they'd come up and tend her grave sometimes, when the ugly damp clay was out of sight, covered over by a thick growth of grass. But she hoped no weeds would take root there. She wouldn't like nettles or docks to make her grave ugly to look at, so that people would shudder when they passed. And there she would lie with the baby, resting quietly

under the grass ; and George, and her mother, and the others, might weep and be as sorry as they liked, she wouldn't make a sign that she heard them, she would simply lie and listen while they wept."

"Why, whatever are 'ee sighing so for?" asked Maggie, in a tone of alarm. She had been watching Lizzie now for some minutes, and could see the tears gathered on her lids.

"I wasn' sighin', was I?" asked Lizzie, shaking herself free from her fancies by a half-reluctant effort of the will. For Lizzie, if the truth must be told, found self-pity as pleasant a morsel as her mind at the moment could supply.

"Well, never mind! Cheer up now! Here, take th' baby, ef you like."

Lizzie took the bairn, and, nestling it against her, felt her courage revive at the touch.

"How good he es!" she whispered to Maggie.

"Iss, he's a dear," Maggie said.

"Ef I could onnly taake un home!" sighed Lizzie, as she watched his little face.

"We musn' be in too gayte a hurry. No doubt 'ull come right in th' end."

"Doan't 'ee think they mus' be wantin' to see un?"

"I've no doubt they are," Maggie said.

"But thee wedn' risk taakin' un, would 'ee?" Lizzie asked, in a rather wistful way.

"I doan't think I would," replied Maggie. "But time 'ull hayle everything," she added, remembering certain wounds of her own.

They were by this time emerging from the lane, which was here almost buried in shadow, so closely interlaced were the boughs, and the sound of the

breakers on the beachline was filling the air so completely that they had to raise their voices to be heard.

"*There's* the house, Lizzie!" shouted Maggie, pointing out a quiet little cottage not very far from the tan-yard, and well within sound of the sea.

Lizzie felt a slight twinge of disappointment at the sight and the smell of the tan (which was strewn rather grimly about, and gave the street a somewhat dirty aspect, especially near the gates of the yard); but she merely remarked to her companion: "Shaan't I be glad to git indoors! I'm as tired as a pedlar's donkey; an' thee mus' be tired out too."

"Iss, I'm raather tired," answered Maggie, who, in fact, was "almost ready to drop," having tramped in from Newlyn to Madron, as well as walked from Madron down here.

But now they were at last at the door, and Lizzie had to face her new landlady, who was happily middle-aged and quiet, and did not delay them very long.

Five minutes afterwards they were up in the room, which was to serve as a bedroom and sitting-room as well, and while Lizzie was looking around, "taking stock" of everything, Maggie laid the table and got around the tea.

She remained with Lizzie about a couple of hours longer—taking charge of her much as a parent might do, since, wanting the satisfaction of her feminine instincts, she must needs find something to love and protect—and they sat together in the cramped little bedroom listening to the moaning of the waves on the beach, and planning out the future of Lizzie and

her infant, with all the little details their fancies could suggest.

Finally, when the windy sunset was making a faint flush of saffron above the clustered roofs of the town, Maggie left the young mother and her infant, and trudged back to Newlyn again.

It was windy and cold on the sea-front this evening, and the lights in the scattered houses which she passed twinkled with a rather tantalising suggestiveness, as she trudged on wearily across the so-called Green. But Maggie was familiar with every inch of the road, and physically tired though she was at the moment, her brain was busy and all alive.

The reasons that had decided her attitude towards Lizzie were still rather nebulous and misty in Maggie's mind; or, rather, she had thus far shirked defining them, half divining the formative influence they would have if deliberately accepted as data for her life. A little pain and much disappointment at the chill in the atmosphere that *hitherto* had surrounded Sam and herself; a sense of wrong, of a hardness in her fate, at being thrown bound at the feet of a passion which could never be anything but a tyrant in her life; and a reckless and angry resurgence of self-will under the galling irritation of thoughts that mocked in the background her disappointed hopes: it was out of this medley of pain and pride and anger—with a touch of true pity for the poor girl herself—that Maggie's friendly interest in Lizzie had emerged as a definite intention to fight the girl's battle against the world.

To Maggie herself life was hard; or, at least, so she chose to assume, and the world (or was it Sam?) had shown her scanty consideration—taking freely,

but giving her little in return—so why should she defer to the wishes and susceptibilities of a world so determined to ignore that she had wishes and susceptibilities of her own?

Maggie felt so sore-hearted at the moment—so aggrieved and disappointed and hurt—that a combative attitude towards her fellows seemed the one wise thing thought could suggest, and she made up her mind to stick to Lizzie, though she and the girl stood alone.

“Perhaps, when he saw she could dare him, had not quite so limp a will as he thought, Sam might learn to respect her a little, and might even regret (who could tell?) that he failed to keep her love while he had it; for, of course, her love for him was dead—or, at least, if not dead, was so stricken that it could never recover again . . . unless . . . unless . . .” Maggie’s mind was swaying, and tears of vexation filled her eyes.

To think, notwithstanding his treatment of her, she should actually feel disturbed about him still, and should even still love him a little!—she grew hot and indignant with herself, and sped on with cheeks flushed and burning, and a heart “sick and sorry” to the core.

But no amount of petulance or anger could disguise the hard truth in the end. Her conduct, her hopes, her resentments—they all were revolving round Sam!

CHAPTER XXVI.

VOX POPULI.

"The voice of the people is the voice of God." (?)

THERE was much animated cackle and many wise shakings of the head when the villagers by-and-by discovered what Maggie Trenwith had done.

While some of the folks were roundly abusing Lizzie—using words about as coarse and ill-favoured as themselves—others were as sharply finding fault with Maggie Trenwith for making life easy for a brazen-faced young hussy who "ought to be made to car' her brat on her back through every lane an' alley in Newlyn an' Penzaance, weth th' crier goin' bowldly before her to summon all th' folks out to see!"

And as for Maggie Trenwith, they remarked, a "daycent young woman like she" ought to have more respect for herself than to soil her hands "playin' weth pitch." If they only had their way, they said grimly, they would have the matter mentioned in the chapel, "spokken out in th' pulpit 'fore all, as a warnin' to daycent young wemmin not to middle weth trollops in trouble ef they dedn' want their names to git blacked."

Whereon Jennifer Harris insinuated, with a leer on her fat, porcine face, that Maggie might be acting with forethought in trying to make the way smooth

for Lizzie ; she might travel the same road herself.

But little cared Maggie for their chatter, when the coarse whispers reached her by-and-by. It was not of *their* opinion she was thinking ; for their cackle she cared not a straw. In her inner life the lights and the shadows seemed to radiate solely from Sam.

Meanwhile Sam's opinion on the subject was for some time a matter of doubt.

Always quiet and ruminant, he appeared to be doubly so now, going about his work with a sombre taciturnity which was noticeable even in so sullen a man. He avoided Maggie with evident intention—going out of his way that their paths might not meet—and passed her shop-door, when to pass it was necessary, with a glance so surcharged with sub-consciousness that his eyes looked as lifeless as glass. But whether he was frozen-tongued because of the gossip which still chilled his world with its bitter east wind, or was grimly wroth with Maggie for defying his wishes, Maggie was at present unable to judge.

As the only touch of romance in her existence came from the glamour shed over it by love, Maggie's heart pined and sickened as the dreamland of fancy faded out of the distant perspective of her life, and instead of Hope standing at the open gates of Paradise, she saw only the sordid gnomes that haunted the shop-till and the ghouls that lurked darkly in the doorways and streets. But, happily, her woman's pride came to her rescue, and, though she suffered keenly, she made not a sign.

To Ellen the disgrace that had befallen the Trewarthas was a matter for secret gratulation, the

gleam of which showed in her eyes. There was no sense of comradeship between her and her husband, the many humiliations which Sam had forced on her having eaten every vestige of love from her heart. Indeed, the sole bond that held them together was a partnership of interests so sordid and prosaic that even the children's share in it failed to touch it with a gleam of romance—the divisions which had alienated the parents running right through the family as well. With Sam Little Lobster had always been the favourite, while with Ellen it was Nelly who was nearest her heart, the youngest, who was called after Phyllis, being willy-nilly thrown on her mother, as Sam cared for Lobster alone.

That Ellen was glad of the humiliation for his family Sam ferreted out soon with his slow, watchful glances, and resented in his own sullen, unforgiving way. And probably the sense of antagonism in his home-life—the failure to master the judgment of his wife and find a facile echo of his moods in her own—made him more bitter than he else would have been against Maggie, who had hitherto seemed to him magnetic and responsive, but in this matter showed a will in conflict with his own, and, if anything, even more hostile than his wife's. There was little emotion in his attitude towards Ellen; he was coldly in antagonism towards her—that was all. But towards Maggie he felt the fiercer, more embittered resentment which is born of a wound from the hand of a friend. Ellen he would have met with a shrug of the shoulders, but Maggie he could almost have met with a blow.

While the thought of her was thus disturbing her

friends, acting as an apple of discord in their midst, Lizzie was finding that *socially* "the way of transgressors is hard."

In Penzance she was practically friendless; her fellow-servants awkwardly evading her, and the other acquaintances she had made among the townsfolk deliberately shunning her, or cutting her direct. Except the landlady—whose husband was a sailor, and at present was away on a lengthy voyage—Lizzie had not a soul to speak to in all the pleasant little town; and the painful contrast between her present isolation and the sunny sense of neighbourliness to which she had been accustomed, made the girl feel as though she were famishing for want of a little human love.

When Maggie now came in to visit her, Lizzie clung to her with querulous pertinacity, ever fretfully harping on her loneliness, and imploring her kind-hearted visitor to, if possible, smooth the way for her that she might once more return to her friends.

But this, though she often attempted it, Maggie found she was powerless to effect.

Lizzie's parents were overworked and poor; and that selfish contraction of sympathies which their poverty-stricken life had induced made them disinclined to burden themselves with Lizzie and her infant, while Maggie was willing to bear the burden instead. If Sam would have contributed a little towards her maintenance, they might have consented to take Lizzie back; but with Sam so implacably determined to disown her, they hung their hands limply, and left her to herself.

Meanwhile, Maggie was undergoing a parallel

experience, though she locked her lips mutely, and even tried to smile. The love of a life-time—as she felt it to be ; for Sam's marriage, though it wounded and bewildered her, had failed to kill the fancies she nursed—was being slowly murdered in her bosom, and she had not the right to complain. She was thankful, however, to have something to think of beyond the sharp pain in her heart, and Lizzie was an opportune distraction of which she was glad to make the most.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WITHIN SOUND OF THE SEA.

It was now winter, wet and windy, but with only an occasional white fog sweeping in suddenly from the tossing Atlantic and almost as suddenly drifting away, and with no snow and but little frost on the sheltered slopes on which Penzance was planted, though the wind-swept hills in the background were occasionally touched with rime.

The sleepy little town—so quiet in winter, except in front of the sea-wall where the waves foamed all day long, or down in the well-protected harbour where the coasters came and went, and the fishing-boats flocked for shelter when a roaring storm arose—has rarely, even in December, an absolutely sunless day, so that Lizzie could move about freely, even with a baby in her arms, instead of sitting “eating her heart” in the dreary little room where she lived.

But, all the same, the fretful young mother, discontented and seething with rebellion—though rather against people than facts—found no pleasure in the life that lay nearest her, but was always wishing, vainly and wearily, for the past to come back with its happiness, or the future to lay down across her bedclothes the narrow box in which she could rest. And because to her dull, sickly fancies, gangrened with self as she was, her baby seemed the cause of

her unhappiness, she began now to hate the tiny infant whose life weighed so heavily on her own. If he would but die out of the way! was now the constant burden of her thoughts. But "grudged folks live long," says the proverb; and the bairn seemed to thrive through it all.

At last there stole into her mind the idea that if he would not die she would try to get rid of him, but in what way she could not decide. The idea, however, fascinated and haunted her, and she could not get it out of her brain.

Instead now of staying indoors, as she had of late begun to do, she was constantly roaming about, with the infant snuggled up in her arms, haunting the Ponsandane river where it ran through a thick belt of trees, or restlessly wandering along the sea-front, especially as the night began to fall; but always at the critical moment the fear in her heart grew alive, and she failed to do the evil deed she proposed, though wishing it done all the while.

At times, as she watched the train rushing across the viaduct and then along the line where it skirted the beach, Lizzie felt half inclined to throw herself and her infant underneath the huge mass that swept along so smoothly, and could crush out their lives ere her heart could leap twice; while at other times the thought of the towns the train must run through—of Truro and Plymouth and London itself!—filled her mind with a hungry desire to be inside it, and be borne away anywhere, so long as she left behind her the infant she hated and the old life she loathed.

On the last day of the year Lizzie became especially restless, and the baby, who happened to be poorly, seemed to fret the strength out of her nerves to such

an exasperating extent that the young mother cried with vexation, till her eyes were as sore as her heart.

She had not seen Maggie since Christmas, as the weather had been exceptionally wild, and, alone with the puling little infant and a miserable company of thoughts, Lizzie grew so despondently wretched that when she saw a funeral pass the window she even fell to envying the corpse.

But gradually the youthful blood in her began again to freshen her veins, and under its revivifying influence she descried such long vistas in life that death grew intolerable to her—what she wanted was freedom, not death ; and thereupon the weight of her anger seemed to fall on the helpless little infant, who stood between her and the happiness which she fancied her freed hands could seize, and she said to herself she would drown him—she would rid herself of him to-night.

The heat and restlessness of a purpose angrily endeavouring to form itself, yet aghast at its ultimate drift, kept tormenting her almost beyond endurance as the sluggish hands slept on their round and the daylight still lingered in the heavens as if afraid to trust the world to-night ; but when the blurred scarlet and vermillion splashed across the grey mounds of cloud, and the wailing wind began to grow importunate, and the great hollow moan of the ocean seemed to deepen as the light flickered out, Lizzie felt her courage rise with the darkness that was gradually whelming the world. What she thought was the lawlessness of Nature fed her own lawless instincts as well, and she fancied her crime might be hidden in the trouble and confusion abroad ; so,

dressing herself and wrapping up the infant, she quietly stole from the house.

The long beach between Marazion and Chy'ndour is a wild place when the winds of winter are troublously growling across the waters of the bay and the giant rollers foam upon the sands ; and to-night the scene, in its eerie desolation, impressed the mind like a haunted spot.

Out of the solid wall of blackness—which was the form the distance took across the sea—the curving breakers, maned with foam, would suddenly rush within the line of vision, rearing their crests and roaring aloud, and then, a moment after, as if by magic, their giant bulk would be shattered on the beachline and all the air would be thick with spray. Meanwhile the wind would be screaming hoarsely as it swept the spindrift up the shore ; and except within the narrow range of vision, the sullen night would so close round that the soul seemed nakedly left to itself, with no other watch or check upon its actions than the great blind wind and the blinder sea.

And as Lizzie walked along the beach to-night with little Georgie nestled against her breast, the wildness of the scene as well as its desolation—its remoteness from the life and interests of the world—so subtly wrought themselves into her fancies, that, instead of feeling awed by the appalling loneliness, she felt her nerves steeled and attempered and her passions fed up to white heat.

Yet, none the less, she shrank from the action which would take away her freedom once for all, and kept pacing to and fro in the darkness, persistently asserting her decision, but encountered with

equal pertinacity by a sense of invisible restraint.

An hour or so passed in this manner, till her clothes were at last drenched with spray and a feeling of physical discomfort was added to her mental unrest.

Suddenly, as she paced along abstractedly, so close to the thick creamy foam with which the waves beslavered the beach that her feet at times dabbled in the wash, a billow came rushing in landward with such unexpected fury and force that before she was aware of her danger she felt its heavy swirl about her legs.

In an instant, or less than an instant, its huge bulk was circling round her waist, and the horror of her awful position seemed to suffocate thought in her brain.

With a scream of maniacal terror she flung her infant out of her arms, and tried to stagger forward up the beach through the angry belt of water and foam which already stretched a dozen yards ahead.

The powerful tug of the water, as the billow drained back from the shore, caught the girl from her waist to her ankles with a wrench that almost carried her away; but in her overmastering anguish, her blind desire to hold fast to life, Lizzie strained every sinew in her body to grip the sliding shingle with her feet—and somehow succeeded in doing so, though the effort almost sucked out her life.

Within about a second or so afterwards she was standing alone on the beachline with the frothing foam draining past her feet, when she all at once realised her crime, seemed to understand what she had done, and the horror of it so overwhelmed her that Lizzie became like one mad.

She ran along the edge of the retreating billows, bare-headed, tearing her hair with her hands, and screaming aloud to the pitiless darkness with a cry even shriller than that of the wind.

In the ravings of her anguish, so wild was her emotion that foam and even blood began to issue from her lips, and she was just about to fling herself in among the breakers, when suddenly she espied, drifted high on the shingle, the little white bundle which for her was the world !

Darting on it with a shriek that was almost inhuman, she caught up the bundle and took to her heels.

Nor did the girl slacken her headlong rush onward until she had gained the fringe of turf beside the railway, where she threw herself down with a sobbing cry of gratitude, while the tears streamed blindingly over her face.

The baby was alive, and apparently uninjured, though drenched to the skin by the wave that swept it landward ; and Lizzie's cup of happiness was full to the brim.

Clambering across the railway-line regardless of consequences, for the tumult within her still distracted her brain, she was suddenly aware of a fierce ball of light bearing down upon her through a thunder of sound ; and before she could even send a scream through the darkness, the engine loomed above her . . . caught her just between the shoulders . . . and the train swept on into Penzance with its passengers, leaving Lizzie and her infant huddled between the rails.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SAM HEARS SOME HOME-TRUTHS.

NEXT morning the signalman in the little shanty midway between Marazion and Chy'ndour was looking out carelessly along the glistening railway-track—across which the light had just begun to glint—when he suddenly espied a suspicious bundle lying on the sleepers in the direction of Penzance.

As there would be no train passing the crossing he had charge of for another hour, or rather more, he left his hut and ran along the railway-track with a strange dread sending a tremor through his nerves.

As he neared the bundle huddled between the sleepers he recognised its tragic significance in an instant, but he was overcome by a horrible sensation at the sight of the ghastly relics at his feet, and became so sick that for several seconds he was quite unable to touch the heap.

At last he summoned up courage to inspect it, and found—still shaking with the sickness that had overcome him—that there lay at his feet the mangled body of a girl whom he had more than once noticed of late wandering about Chy'ndour with an infant in her arms.

Where was the baby? he wondered, as he shudderingly bent above the rails.

And even as he touched the corpse a faint cry came from near it—and there was the baby alive!

Unaided he removed the ghastly relics to the grassy slopes adjoining the track; then taking up the motherless infant in his arms, he carefully carried it back to his hut.

When the next train passed in the direction of Penzance, he stopped it at his crossing sufficiently long to communicate the particulars of his discovery, to the guard, and asked that some one might be sent from Penzance to remove the body and take charge of the child.

And shortly afterwards there passed along the road—which here runs parallel with the beach and the railway—a cab in which the corpse and the motherless infant were carefully carried back to Penzance.

When Sam Trewartha heard the news he scarcely knew whether to be glad or sorry. Though shocked at first, as was only natural, in the end he felt decidedly relieved. The disgrace that had threatened to permanently haunt him—fastening on his life like a loathsome disease—had been mercifully removed, and could no more annoy him: for Lizzie was dead, and a kindly Providence would no doubt soon take the infant as well; at any rate, it now would have to go to the workhouse, where it would probably soon pine away, as motherless brats were apt to do. And Sam began to think that when he met Maggie he would overlook her stubbornness and be kind to her again.

His surprise was therefore proportionately great when, on strolling out to the cliff-top to receive the condolences of his friends, he discovered that the

female gossips were condemning himself and his parents with a warmth and vivacity of language in which they but rarely indulged.

There was quite a little crowd near the railings discussing the melancholy news, and he was greeted with a refreshing frankness as soon as he came within hail.

"Arn't 'ee ashamed to shaw thy faace, arter drivin' thy sester to suicide?" cried a wrinkled old fishwife to Sam. "As ef th' poor craytur warn't human, though she ded maake a bit of a slip!"

"Go'se in weth 'ee, man!" cried another. "Thee 'st got a bitter mossel to clunk."

"To trayte th' dear craytur in that way—an' she thy awn sester—shame on 'ee! Thee ought to be hoss-whipt for this!" And the speaker, with her cowl on her shoulders, shook her brown fist at him as she spoke.

"As ef she warn't good enough, poor cheeld! to be awned by her awn flesh an' blood!"

"An' who are they, you, arter all?" And sundry old half-forgotten scandals were busily raked up forthwith.

Among other things Sam's attitude towards Maggie was alluded to now pretty plainly, and condemned in no roundabout terms. As more than one had made a guess at the source whence the money was derived for his recent start in life, the guess was now flung at him boldly, as a challenge and then as a taunt.

"To lev' a girl give 'ee her money—an' thee a marr-ried man weth a fam'ly! Why, thee arn't wuth a man's cast-off clothes!"

"Go an' hide thy faace onder a furze-bush!"

"Or give un a good coat o' tar!"

"Thee'rt wuss than an owld rotten pilchur—
thee'rt nayther good for money nor mait!"

"Go'se in an' hide beneath th' dresser! We
doan't want such men as thee here!"

Sam replied with a volley of oaths, indiscriminately hurled at them all, but was deafened and overpowered by the clamour with which he was instantly assailed.

At first he tried to make his voice audible above the wild mob-fight of sounds, but he was powerless against the shrill pertinacity with which the women kept up their cries; so finally, after easing himself somewhat by swearing until he was hoarse, he sullenly turned on his heel and went gloomily indoors again.

That Lizzie had committed suicide in a fit of not unnatural despair was the general opinion in the village; and the folks who had been loudest in condemning her were now—with a revulsion of feeling to which popular opinion is so prone—as loud, and a little more eager, in condemning her friends for that neglect of her which had led to so tragic a result.

Even Maggie believed that poor Lizzie had deliberately ended her life, and her pity, like that of her neighbours, had a somewhat bitter flavour added to it by her wrath against the girl's heartless friends.

Indeed, when she by-and-by discovered that they were discussing whether, under the circumstances, Lizzie should not be buried by the parish, Maggie grew so indignant against them that rather than this should be, she said, she would pay for the funeral herself. Lizzie's parents—who had been

thoroughly demoralised by the petty economies of life—contentedly accepted the alternative, and let Maggie take the *rôle* of Providence and play the part out to the end. And when she arranged to take the infant, they acquiesced without the least demur.

At the funeral of the poor young mother the mourners (as they conventionally were called) consisted of four persons only : namely, Mr. and Mrs. Trewartha, and Maggie with the child in her arms. Neither Sam nor any of his sisters put in an appearance at the grave : and Maggie kept this grimly in her mind when the bleak day had drifted among her memories and passed into the ghostland of thought.

But for Sam, from Lizzie's fall to her funeral, and afterwards, because of the child, through all the hateful weeks that ensued, the affair was so full of humiliations in its every aspect and phase, that the fact that Maggie Trenwith shunned him and was evidently determined to ignore him, in a quiet, unostentatious way, was only another turn of the thumbscrew, and not a new torture in itself.

Happily, he had Ellen beside him to satisfy his masculine love of mastery when he wished to reassure his self-respect ; and even the loyalty and obedience rendered rather grudgingly by a wife is something a man finds sustaining when other supports are withdrawn.

But Sam, in these weeks of humiliation, was a hard man to live with at home.

CHAPTER XXIX.


WOMAN'S WEIRD.

"We love : and who can blame us ?
But, ah ! the dreary end :
Our dead days rise to shame us
As through the world we wend ;
And lips we loved defame us
As downward we descend."

J. H. P.

To Ellen, the grey monotony of her life had now ceased to be something she rebelled against. She accepted it, not with religious resignation—a submission based upon a belief in compensations—but rather with that limp and helpless acquiescence which is simply and solely an acceptance of the inevitable. The twin ideas of destiny and submission had at last gained the mastery over her life.

A certain amount of material prosperity had begun to filter through her sunless existence since Sam had resumed his place in the fishing fleet. She was able to dress the children a little better, and the food on the table, though coarse, was sufficient. But she had grown strangely regardless of her personal appearance. Though barely thirty, and by no means bad-looking, she was apparently as indifferent as to how she was appraised as if the blight, which had evidently fallen on her nature, had first of all killed its purely feminine traits, that the ultimate recovery



of her happiness might in any case be beyond hope.

And to Sam, who had chosen her primarily for her appearance, this rapid denudation of her attractiveness was an ever-present cause of offence. When he compared her with Maggie Trenwith—whose face was as yet unwasted by sorrow, and whose life had still the buoyancy of hope—he grew so unreasonably angry with the faded woman at his side, that the taunts which he levelled at her were far more cruel than blows.

True, Sam and Maggie but rarely met now; and even when by chance they stumbled across each other, their greetings were brief and markedly restrained. Yet, none the less, Maggie remained Sam's ideal woman, and because he had irrevocably lost her he persisted in loving her still.

If Maggie would only submit to his mastery—would send Lizzie's hateful little brat to the work-house, and live in appealing loneliness in her shop, acknowledging his love in the background, but in no way embarrassing him with claims—Sam would have contemplated with complete satisfaction the life thus so frankly a satellite of his own. But while Maggie persisted in keeping Lizzie's child, she was acting in direct defiance of his wishes; and whether or not they would ever be able to again drift back into friendly relations was a matter growing daily so more and more uncertain, that Sam felt at times he would like to lay hands on her and physically coerce her into doing as he wished.

Meanwhile Maggie was endeavouring, with indifferent success, to find in the helpless little life she had taken an anodyne for the pain that still haunted her heart.

But the passions and desires of the average woman—one from whom love has not concealed its mysteries, yet for whom they have neither become commonplace nor cheapened—can never find complete satisfaction in this way, as Maggie was beginning to discover for herself—though she tried to treat the knowledge as a secret overheard.

She devoted herself ungrudgingly to poor Lizzie's infant: dressing it up lovingly and parading it everywhere, and lavishing upon it all the riches of her nature, in so far as the wee bairn could nestle to her heart. But that magic bond of motherhood, cemented at the breast, she could offer but the feeblest of substitutes for. And Maggie was aware of a want in her nature which the little life rather provoked than allayed.

To see Maggie Trenwith standing at her shop door, dandling in her arms the hated child of his sister, was always sufficient to madden Sam with passion. Setting his teeth, while his gorge rose within him, he would "stomp," to his cottage, swearing brutally at the infant, and would there vent his anger on anyone or everyone—except Little Lobster, who still remained his favourite—Ellen being usually the scapegoat for all.

Since its flickering little life—so innocuous otherwise—was so fruitful a cause of discomfort to herself, Ellen presently began to dislike the wee infant; though at first she had been secretly glad of its presence, as it caused such intense irritation to her husband, and at the same time built between him and Maggie what seemed to be an ever-growing barrier of reserve.

But it was doomed that Lizzie should be avenged,

through her infant, for her brother's abandonment of her in her need; and Sam was to feel the hand of Nemesis lying heavily on his shoulder all through his life.

One day when Sam had been unusually exasperated at seeing Maggie walking to and fro on the cliff-top with little Georgie lovingly snuggled in her arms, he came into the cottage swearing so violently that Ellen—who was not in the best of tempers, having found the children exceptionally tiresome—happened to unluckily meet him with a taunt.

"Wha's all this fuss about a base cheeld? Thee must larn to grin an' bear it," said she.

Sam's big fist was doubled in an instant, and, as Ellen swerved aside to avoid him, she received the blow full on her breasts.

Ellen fell against the table with a sickening sensation—gasping, and pressing her hands to her bosom.

"Oh, Sam . . . thee'st hurt me . . . thee'st hurt me!" she moaned.

"Come, git th' tay!" growled her husband.

"I caan't . . . for a minute . . . I'm faint."

"I wish thee wert dead," he said grimly.

"Thee may soon . . . have thee wish," Ellen gasped.

CHAPTER XXX.

A VISIT TO THE DOCTOR.

"In vain we cling about the knees of Time,
Imploring mercy sweet;
Its eyes with deep compassion are sublime—
But cruel are its feet."

J. H. P.

A WEEK or so afterwards Ellen began to ail, though what was the matter with her she was unable to say.

More than once terrible fits of fainting—with a horrible sickening sensation in the background—entirely prostrated her in the midst of her work, and she began to visibly waste away.

But Sam refused to consider these symptoms as worthy of attention or in any way grave. He was brutally indifferent to her growing weakness, and persisted in asserting that her general querulousness was due to her desire to make his life unpleasant—"she was all'ys so cussedly contrairy in her ways."

In the interval, little Georgie, who had caused the disaster—as if he had merely been an instrument of Fate and his vengeful mission was now fulfilled—was attacked by some obscure childish ailment, and one fine morning in the early spring, as Maggie was tenderly rocking him in her lap, his little eyes

closed as if in slumber, but were destined never to open again.

At which relief Sam was so brutally jubilant that, on hearing the welcome news from a neighbour, he went off at once to the nearest public-house, and did not again emerge from the taproom till he reeled out what he called "gloriously drunk."

After the loss of little Georgie, Maggie set herself resolutely to rearrange her life. She had some thoughts, at first, of selling her business and going to live quietly in a cottage in Penzance, where the ghosts in her memory would be easier to *lay*. But when it came to counting the cost of the sacrifice, she felt it was something she was unable to face.

For Maggie Trenwith the quaint little village was so familiarly full of memories that it was neither commonplace nor novel, but the necessary appanage of life. That peculiar damascening of emotion and vision, which forms for the mind its hieroglyphics of events, had, as it were, inwrought the physiognomy of Newlyn into the innermost substance of her thoughts, and she seemed to feel that if she sought an alien environment she would only take with her the shell of her heart. So she ultimately decided that, till God should remove her, she would work out in Newlyn the freeing of her life with as steady a courage as she had at command.

As she watched Ellen's illness, though ignorant of the blow, she felt certain in her mind as to who was its cause. And Maggie felt her pity for Ellen's unhappy marriage react with decisive results on herself.

Sam's various advances—and he ventured on many—Maggie quietly, but very decidedly, repelled. She

was gradually learning to perceive the man's nature with a penetrating clearness which pained as well as shocked her, so wholly unexpected were the secrets it disclosed.

True, he was still the only lover she remembered—the only man in all the little village who was able to set her nerves keenly a-thrill; but the repugnance towards him now growing on her was manifestly not due to any passing pique, but to such a vital change in her nature as could have but one normal result.

For some months Ellen concealed her illness from her friends, being doubtful herself as to what it really meant. But one day, when Phyllis was paying her a visit, Ellen happened to have one of her anguishing spasms, and Phyllis immediately grew greatly alarmed.

She questioned Ellen closely as to what was the matter with her; but Ellen, though willing, now the ice was once broken, to dilate without reserve on her ever-increasing weakness, was unable to explain what the symptoms might portend.

That evening Phyllis hastened off to her mother and explained the matter to her in all its gravity. She must make Ellen go to the doctor, Phyllis said.

The next day the grandmother came to Newlyn, driven down in her little donkey-cart by Uncle Ben.

No sooner had she questioned her daughter about her symptoms, than a terrible foreboding took possession of her thoughts.

Said the mother: "Thee must go an' see th' doctor at wance."

Ellen complained that it would be so expensive. She couldn't afford to be ill just at present. And,

besides, Sam would grudge the money and inconvenience. She would no doubt be better in a little while. Wouldn't it be wisest to wait?

"No," said her mother emphatically; "thee must see th' doctor, Ellen, at wance."

Ellen raised a host of other objections, but the mother was inexorably persistent: she must see the doctor to-day!

Finally, it was arranged that the next-door neighbour should look after the children for the afternoon, while Ellen was to be driven to Penzance in the donkey-cart in order to at once have medical advice.

The doctor was not long in coming to a decision, though he mercifully concealed it from Ellen herself.

He managed to send Ellen to the kitchen with the servants in order that she might have some needed refreshment before riding back in the cart to Newlyn, but detained her mother for a few last words.

"It is a case of cancer in the breast," he said.

"Es there any hope, sir?" the mother asked tremulously.

"None—not the least!" said the doctor emphatically. "I am afraid it is only a question of weeks."

"An' that blaw was th' cause of it, thee think, sir?"

"Yes, I am afraid so," he said.

The irreversible decision had been given, and the mother went down to the kitchen to prepare to drive the doomed woman home.

As they drove back to Newlyn, past the breezy esplanade, and then along the highway skirting the beach, the beauty of the scenery seemed to touch

Ellen strangely. It was as though she was aware of it for the first time, and felt, intermingled with the sudden appreciation, the added preciousness of a last glance.

And yet, through it all, the dear and familiar landmarks kept waking in her memory unnumbered associations, sweet or bitter, as the case might be, but all of them taking now a tinge of pathos from those half-stifled hints and reverberations in her consciousness of which she was growing so poignantly aware.


The superb expanse of waters between the Land's End and Lizard had never seemed more exquisitely beautiful than to-day. And the mysterious line of the distant horizon stirred a thousand elusive suggestions within her. She had grave thoughts of heaven, and graver thoughts of death.

As she glanced at the scattered boats of the fishing fleet sprinkling the vast blue plain of the bay as they slowly crept towards the distant fishing grounds, Ellen thought to herself how pleasant it would be if she could be lifted into one of these boats just now and sail away quietly, without the wrench of parting, into that mysterious realm of silence where all averred that sorrow was unknown and those who were weary entered into rest.

And therewith she drooped her head, heavily sighing.

"Es th' pain growing wuss?" her mother asked anxiously.

Ellen noticed an unaccountable change in her parent. The old woman, usually so quiet and phlegmatic, seemed to-day to be full of a fidgety unrest. She kept furtively watching her daughter all the



while, and seemed scarcely able to leave her quiet for a minute. Now she would ask her if the jolting was hurting her; and now "ded she feel th' wind ovver-fresh?"—"Have my shawl to wrap around thy shoulders, will 'ee, Ellen?"—"Lean against *me* ef thee'rt tired, *me* cheeld."

But Ellen, although she was feeling rather weak—as much from the reaction of the visit to the doctor, as from the unaccustomed drive and the excitement of it all—was enjoying herself in a rather dreamy fashion, though not without a silent undercurrent of thoughts that occasionally made a mist gather in her eyes.

How beautiful everything was looking to-day! The children seemed so strong and healthy, and so wonderfully happy, she thought. And the people that passed them looked strong and healthy also—stepping out briskly, as if glorying in their strength. While here was she weak and forlorn and unhappy; unloved by her husband, and helpless in her misery . . . and the warm tears brimmed over and fell upon her cheek.

The mother put her arm about her soothingly; much as one might pet a sick child.

"Lean thy head agenst *me*, cheeld," said granny; "this joltin' es more than thee can stand."

Not till Ellen was safely indoors and the excitement of the journey was over, did the mother break the fatal news to her.

But Ellen bore it better than she expected.

"I'm sorry for the cheldern's saake," she said. "But Sam 'ull be happy at laast." And then, as she leaned back wanly with both her hands clutching at her breast, she added, "Ef he marr-ries Maggie

Trenwith I hope she'll be kind to the cheldern: she was kind enough to Lizzie's so I've heerd."

The mother began to tie her long bonnet-ribbons, carefully shaping the bow which was then worn under the chin.

"It's a weary world, this," said the mother. "Things es all'ys gittin' muddled an' twested. It's hardly wuth livin' in at all."

"Iss it es, mawther," said her daughter. "There's th' cheldern to rear . . . an' awther raysons. I can hardly faancy . . ." here she sighed deeply; and the mother's aged eyes began to fill.

"Well, at any rate, Sam 'ull be happy. He've ben waitin' for this," Ellen said.

And with this thought persistently asserting itself, Ellen set herself now to face her doom.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A LAST LOOK AT "HOME."

"And still the pines of Ramoth wood
Are moaning like the sea—
The moaning of the sea of change
Between myself and thee."

EVERYONE in the village was sympathetically sorry when the news of Ellen's illness became bruited abroad. But as Ellen rigorously concealed the cause of it, Sam escaped the censure he so richly deserved.

During the latter weeks of Ellen's painful illness Phyllis took charge of Sammy and the baby, leaving only little Nelly in the house with the grandmother, who had come now to stay with her daughter till "the end."

Sam showed no signs of remorse for his conduct, and no sign of interest in his fast-dying wife. True, he was usually at home when ashore, or, at any rate, not farther off than the cliff-rail, but he visited her bedside as rarely as possible, and was doggedly unsympathetic throughout.

More than once Maggie Trenwith debated in her mind as to whether or not she should call upon Ellen: not exactly to exchange confidences with her, but, if possible, to let them ease their hearts towards each other and feel their way gradually towards a

reconciling friendliness. But always, at the last moment, something restrained her. Ellen's tongue had been sharp at her expense in the past; and if the dying woman should turn upon her now, Maggie felt that the bitterness of what Ellen might say could never be wholly washed out of her thoughts. Finally, after hours of troubled thought on the matter, she decided that perhaps she had better not visit her: she must leave the adjustment of their rights and wrongs to God, who would no doubt be mercifully just to them both.

Gradually, as Ellen drew near to her end, she began to feel an ever-increasing desire to once more visit the home of her childhood and hear the clamour of the crows among the trees—a familiar sound that was far dearer to her than the troubled moan of the sea beneath her window, or the rattle of the fish-carts passing the door.

Her weakness was, however, so painfully great that her mother and Phyllis tried to combat the desire by every means of which they could think. But Sam, when consulted on the subject, said “he dedn’ care a cuss what she ded.”

And Ellen, with the querulous insistency of sickness, kept so constantly harping on this one theme, that ultimately her mother, with many misgivings, agreed that she should be driven up to Treen in the donkey-cart, and should take little Nelly with her as well.

It was a pathetic picture which Ellen presented as they propped her up in pillows in the cart, with rosy little Nelly seated at her side, and drove her as slowly and carefully as possible through the winding lanes that led to Treen.

Phyllis and 'Siah accompanied her on foot—the distance being only about a mile and a half—while the grandmother drove the patient donkey, who knew the way almost as well as herself.

As the little cart drove out of Newlyn, many of the neighbours came to their doors in order to greet and inquire after Ellen ; and the wasted woman with her sunken-in eyes, and her expression of poignant though patient suffering, left a trace of her presence in their thoughts for hours.

As for Ellen, she was surprised as well as pleased at the kindness and interest so markedly displayed ; and as she laid her hand on the head of little Nelly, smoothing the child's abundant curls, a restful look settled on her countenance and her great black eyes grew tenderly moist.

The sun looked musingly down on the hill tops ; and the wide world tremulously smiled in the light. There were still a few stray flowers in the hedgerows—a spray of honeysuckle or of blackberry blossoms and an occasional ragged spike of a fox-glove not quite bare of its velvety bells—but Summer had gathered up her treasures and departed, and the shadow of Autumn troubled the world.

The busy sparrows twittered noisily at intervals, and the rooks cawed mournfully among the stubble in the fields ; but the music heard among the thorns and brambles, though sweet withal, was fitful and brief.

And Ellen, from her propped-up seat in the cart, looking wistfully into the heart of the hedges, needed no one now to elaborate the text.

Nelly was delightfully full of life, and kept

Uncle 'Siah incessantly busy picking blackberries for her little white teeth to munch on, or bunches of haws for her fingers to strip. But except for the unthinking vivacity of the child, the group was so full of a troubled mournfulness that it almost chilled the air as it passed.


The sight of the old familiar homestead was more than Ellen was able to stand. The rush of thoughts that filled her as she approached it turned her deadly faint, and she fell back among the pillows with cheeks even whiter than the linen which they pressed.

Presently, with Uncle Ben's assistance, they lifted her carefully out of the cart and carried her into the shadow-checkered kitchen with its whitewashed rafters and clean sanded floor; and here for a little while she recovered animation, and even feebly endeavoured to smile.

But every one felt that the journey was a mistake. The strain on her emotions was too poignant—her lips were quivering the whole of the time—and they were more than once afraid (as Ben afterwards expressed it) “that th' poor dear sawl would die in their hands.”

In order to please his dying sister, Tom went out and managed to set the crows a-cawing; and then, when he was out of sight of every one, he had a hearty blubber all to himself, and came back red-eyed and painfully mute.

This thing and that thing must be showed to Ellen: the china ornaments she had worshipped as a child, and admired a little covetously even now; and the coloured prints which adorned the bedroom and had one time seemed to her so “mighty fine.”



And even her tiny pet bantam, which was called affectionately Little John, must now be caught and brought into the kitchen, that it might sit for a minute or two in her lap.

But all the while the shadow which stood behind her chair was so painfully present to the consciousness of every one, that the scene, in spite of its touches of humour, seemed to have a strangely bitter flavour for the thoughts: and 'Siah kept blowing his nose so persistently that Phyllis at last began to notice his discomfort and sent him out with Nelly to visit the pigs.

The final scene, when Ellen was carried from the house with the certainty that she would never see it again, broke down the self-control of more than 'Siah; and Tom and Uncle Ben, and Phyllis also, appeared to be almost choked with their tears.

Only the mother and her dying daughter seemed to retain their self-possession throughout: the mother intently watching her daughter, with her lips compressed and her nostrils tense, and Ellen sinking into a lethargic languor which scarcely left her strength enough to sigh.

It was a dreary homeward drive to Newlyn, in spite of the mellow afternoon sunshine which was imperceptibly paling across the hedgerows as the sun went slowly down the sky.

An anguishing spasm had attacked poor Ellen as the cart jolted heavily along the uneven roadway, and it was only by the most unremitting attention that they were able to bring her alive to her cottage, into which she was carried like one already dead.

Maggie watched the disquieting scene from her window—where she was hidden from sight among

the canisters and bottles—and was so much upset at the pitiful spectacle that she rushed upstairs and had a violent fit of weeping ; after which she impulsively fell upon her knees and began to pray earnestly for her poor dying neighbour, who was now within sight of “ the river ” at last.

The boats were all at sea this evening, and only the womenfolk hung around the doors discussing and anticipating the fast-approaching end.

With the moonrise, however, Ellen seemed to recover : she was calmer, and expressed herself almost free from pain.

But the grandmother told both Phyllis and 'Siah that they must come again as early as possible in the morning, and bring the children with them, as the end was at hand.

Several times that night, in her intervals of consciousness, Ellen kept repeating that she wanted to see Sam. And the grandmother more than once went to the window to look out across the bay, lying empty in the moonlight, in order to see if the boats were in sight.

At last, as the sun began to redden the east, up through the ever-widening splendours of the sunrise came the welcome sails of the returning boats. Across the glassy surface of the sea their long black shadows were projected for miles ; and the mother told Ellen that within a few hours her husband would be at her bedside, please God !

About eight o'clock Phyllis and 'Siah arrived, having toiled all the way with the children in their arms.

“ Taake th' donkey-cart an' drive to Penzaance to fetch Sam,” quoth the mother to 'Siah, in reply to

his questions. "Tell un he'll ha' to come as quickly as possible, ef he got any wish to see his wife alive!"

On which 'Siah immediately put in the donkey, and without another word started off for Penzance.

CHAPTER XXXII.

PULVIS ET UMBRA.

"Tear down the veil
That darkens death—
'Tis but a tale,
An idle breath.
The cheeks may pale,
The conscience weep—
We pass the veil,
And all is sleep."

J. H. P.

'SIAH drove the donkey as hard as it would go, and in rather less than three-quarters of an hour he found himself on the quay at Penzance.

On making inquiries as to Sam's whereabouts, he discovered that his brother-in-law was in the Dolphin Tavern—a little inn overlooking the harbour and much frequented by seafaring folk.

Leaving the cart in the care of a boy, 'Siah hurried up the steps leading to the tavern, and at once rushed into the dingy tap-room, which was reeking with the fumes of tobacco and beer.

Going up to Sam, who was sitting in a corner

quietly sipping a pot of beer, 'Siah, now almost overcome with agitation, explained the terrible urgency of his errand, and asked Sam to come home with him at once.

"Shaan't start 'till I've finished this pot," growled Sam: "an' I haan't got haaf-way through un as yet. An' I arn't goin' to hurry, mind 'ee. I'm goin' to taake me time."

"But thy wife's dyin', man!" gasped 'Siah. "She may be dead 'fore now!"

"Ef she's dead it's no use hurryin'; an', anyway, I arn't goin' to stir 'till I've drinked this pot out—theer!"

'Siah stared aghast at his callousness and stood at the door to wait.

Presently, when the pot was emptied, Sam leisurely rose, and, with dawdling carelessness, slouched down the steps and mounted the cart.

'Siah at once began to whip up the donkey.

"None o' that!" shouted Sam with an oath. "I doan't want me bones brok', darn 'ee! Lev' her go aisy, man."

And 'Siah, both appalled and disgusted, let the beast go as it pleased.

At the entrance to the village they met one of the neighbours, who was posted there to bid them hurry on, as Ellen had not many minutes to live.

On which, in spite of Sam's opposition, 'Siah whipped up the donkey with all his might.

They arrived, however, just too late.

When they opened the door, the house was full of wailing. Ellen had been dead about five or six minutes, and Phyllis was in violent hysterics in the kitchen, the neighbours vainly endeavouring to quiet

her while the mother was tenderly closing Ellen's eyes.

"Wish I'd stayed in Penzaance an' ben out of it!" was the husband's only remark.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE LAND OF LOST HOPES.

"Still the visions haunt and vex me;
Still they trouble and perplex me
Unconfest.
Must they shadow thought for ever?
Shall I drink of Lethe never?
I am weary of endeavour——
O for rest!"

J. H. P.

WHEN Ellen was laid at rest beneath the sods, Sam found that her absence inconvenienced him so greatly that at times he almost wished she was back with him again.

Sammy was quite a little imp of mischief, toddling off to the beach on the slightest provocation, in order to sail chips in the pools among the rocks, and generally having to be fetched back by someone, with a prospective whipping hanging over his head. Nelly, though less adventurous than her brother, was skilled in the mysteries of "ickle mud pies," and could manage to make herself in five minutes unexpectedly dirty from her eyebrows to her toes.

Phyllis occasionally visited the children, and offered to take the baby herself. But Sam was so

surly and repellent in his manner, that her visits became infrequent, and the offer fell through. While the grandmother, once offering to make a suggestion, was so decidedly snubbed that she never called again.

The men-folk, however, paid less heed to Sam; and 'Siah and Uncle Ben, and even Tom Trevor, kept an eye on the children for the sake of poor Ellen, and tried to make the little ones happy in their way.

Ultimately, after wearying out the patience of the neighbours—who did their best for him, and were rarely even thanked—Sam had to get one of his sisters to keep house for him, an arrangement that was evidently little to his liking, as his sister, like himself, had a temper of her own.

All the winter Sam kept *geeking* after Maggie, endeavouring in every way, direct and indirect, to cross her path and exchange a few words with her, even if they went no farther than “good-day.”

But Maggie, though she never took the trouble to avoid him, deliberately kept him at arm's-length throughout.

At times the touch of pathos in Sam's position—the way in which a widower with his hands full of children appeals to the protective instinct in a woman—rather played on Maggie's mind, and almost turned her from her purpose. But something of Malachi's sturdy self-control was inherited by his daughter; and she held to her mood.

Still, she was furtively kind to the children, especially to mischievous little Sammy, whose dirty hands she would often fill with sweets. Sammy, however, being rather selfish, usually ran away

somewhere out of sight in order to gobble up all the sweets himself. But when Maggie found out this, she was ever after careful to see that little Nelly got a reasonable share also—a proceeding which Sammy viewed with sullen disgust.

“She’s coortin’ un through the cheldern, as many have done afore her,” was the sneering remark of the gossips on the cliff.

But they were chary of making these remarks before Maggie. Her dreamy blue eyes, with their tender expression, could steel themselves, if need be, and flash alive with scorn; and her tongue, though so quiet, could say a cutting thing occasionally, as more than one gossip found out to her cost.

“She’s got somethin’ o’ Malachi in her,” said the neighbours—an opinion in which they were not far wrong.

When the tittle-tattle reached the ears of Phyllis, she remarked:

“I onnly wish Maggie *wed* have un. She’d maake a good mawther to th’ cheldern. But I doubt ef she’ll risk it,” added Phyllis; “she doan’t sim in want of a man.”

“She’ll jump at th’ chaance!” quoth the gossips. “Ef ’a onnly lift ’es finger, she’ll be there!”

And much the same idea, apparently, hovered about in Sam’s mind at times, though occasionally his gross self-complacency was disturbed by a twinge of misgiving, and he feared to put his fate to the test.

For months he continued thus irresolute and doubtful, ever watchful of Maggie, but afraid of her mood.

But one day he felt his blood freshen so keenly that he there and then determined to probe for her heart.

The pleasant summer twilight was settling on the village when Sam, dressed out in his "Sunday best," strolled, with an assumption of careless confidence, across the cliff and up to Maggie's door.

Rat-tat-tat! went Sam on the panels.

And two or three neighbours thrust out their heads and made significant gestures to one another as they recognised the form standing there in the dusk.

Rat-tat-tat! went Sam again.

And this time Maggie opened the door.

She paled with surprise as she encountered Sam's glance—which she saw was charged with a peculiar significance—and on learning that he wished to have a few minutes' chat with her, she at first seemed unwilling to grant his request.

But on noticing the neighbours *geeking* from their doors, Maggie changed her mind, and invited him in.

"S'pose thee'rt surprised to see me?" said Sam, as he seated himself in the chair which she offered him.

"Iss, I must say I am," answered Maggie, taking her stand beside the small round table on which lay her knitting and two or three books.

"Iss, no doubt, no doubt," said Sam. "The fact es, I meant to ha' spok' to 'ee afore. In fact, I ben wantin' to spayke to 'ee a long time . . . ever sence . . . ever sence that day in Penzaance."

Maggie opened her hands behind her and clutched the table with them, and then leaned her whole weight heavily against the knuckles.

She was very pale as she stood there fronting him, and he noticed this and the fact of her standing.

"Why doan't 'ee set down, Maggie?" he asked.

"Thaank 'ee, I ben settin' all the afternoon."

Though he heard, Sam scarcely noticed her answer; he was trying to find out words for his thoughts.

"I han't forgot that day in Penzaance," said he haltingly, "an' thy kindness to me arterwards——"

But Maggie interrupted him.

"Many things have happened sence then," Maggie said.

"But nawthin', I hope, to change thy feelin's towards me, Maggie?"

Maggie looked at him steadily for, it might be, a second. And though he at first tried to answer her look, his eyes in the end involuntarily drooped.

"I doan't onderstand . . ." he began: and then stopped.

"There's little to onderstand about it," said Maggie.

"We have both of us changed. 'Tes best as it es."

"But I doan't onderstand, all th' saame," he said huskily.

His longing for Maggie was a veritable passion, though the passion of a nature coarse of grain beyond doubt.

As she caught the bewildered expression in his eyes—an expression that even, for a second, had a startling suggestion of pain—Maggie seemed to feel a sudden warmth of tenderness overcome her heart at his glance. In spite of her absolute conviction in the background that she never again could approach him with trust, her womanhood was touched and disturbed by the appeal. Remembering her past tenderness towards him, and how impossible it was to

root out of her consciousness the many groups of memories in which he played a part, for the moment Maggie wavered and almost relented—felt half inclined, in fact, to surrender to her sex, and submissively accept, as her inevitable burden, this life full of flaws which came pleading for her care. But at that moment, somewhere in the depths of her consciousness, Maggie was aware of the wan face of Ellen, and of Lizzie's haggard countenance as she lay in her coffin; and immediately the weakness seemed to pass away from her, and she felt she was able to repudiate the claim.

They had evidently missed the road leading to El Dorado, and had both arrived instead in the Land of Lost Hopes. And here they must now be content to abide.

"I doan't onderstand, all the saame," he said huskily.

And she answered him, just a little tremulously :

" 'T'es best as it es ; lev' it rest."

"But it esn' a little thing to me. I *want* 'ee, Maggie. Doan't 'ee be hard!"

" 'T'es no use discussin' it farther," answered Maggie, leaning all her weight against the table as she spoke, so painfully in want of support did she feel.

"For God's saake, doan't thraw me ovver, Maggie ! I ben all'ys lookin' forward to havin' 'ee—ever sence we was cheldern together!"

"I caan't help it," she answered, trembling violently.

She was sorely troubled, and her heart swelled within her ; she was giving up more than the day-dreams of a girl. If she now rejected Sam, it was

inevitable (she felt) that her life as a woman would be for ever incomplete. And besides . . . and besides . . . ! She was none the less a woman because she had judged her old sweetheart and condemned him. She was very lonely, and sorely in want of love. If she could but have accepted, without loss of self-respect, the gift which was being so urgently proffered to her, she would have done so—how gladly! But she could not!—she could not! Though this she had to tell herself again and again before she could quiet the hunger in her heart. And Maggie leaned limply against the little round table with her eyes full of trouble and with quivering lips.

Seeing these signs of unmistakable agitation, Sam Trewartha felt a sudden twitch of annoyance at what he considered Maggie's silly vacillation—her childish unwillingness to speak out the words which must surely be trembling on the tip of her tongue. With an unfortunate return of his old surly masterfulness, he all at once determined to wring an answer from her and waste no more time shilly-shallying in this way.

“Lev' us maake a match of it an' have it ovver,” said he.

“Wance for all—that can never be, Sam!” she replied.

Before he spoke, Maggie had been wavering—pitying both him and herself. But his words, and the tone in which he uttered them, seemed to wake her out of a dream. She appeared to hear in them an echo of the tragedy whose last scenes she watched with such pained self-reproach; and, not without a pang and a shiver as she did so, she deliberately rang the death-knell of her hopes.

"What 'ee mayne?" asked Sam, rising to his feet.

"What I've said," answered Maggie, pale and trembling.

"After all tha's come an' gone 'tween us both!"

She looked up at him sharply for an instant, with something of anger in her glance.

"Nonsense! Thee'rt talkin' like a woman! This es onnly a maggot in thy brain. Thee'lt forgit all this trash by to-morra. Lev' us maaake a match of it!" he urged.

"No!" said Maggie, quietly but firmly.

"For th' cheldern's sake!"

"No!" she replied.

He advanced as if to put his arm around her.

"Staand back, Sam Trewartha, ef thee please!"

He could hardly yet believe his own ears. Did she mean he was definitely rejected?

"Why, Maggie, I asked 'ee to marr-ry me! What are 'ee afereed of?" he asked.

"I've answered 'ee. Please, will 'ee go?"

Quoth Sam, as he moved towards the door, "Whatever's maade 'ee alter like this? Es it 'cause I'm a widower, an' owlder?"

"It's no use discussin' it farther. Be keerful: th' shop's raather dark."

"Then thee waan't ha' me, Maggie? Es that thy maynin'?"

"Iss; tha's my maynin'," answered Maggie.

"Es there any grudge 'genst me in thy mind?"

"A raather pleasant evening," quoth Maggie, as she opened the door to let him out.

"Iss . . . well, I never . . ." he began ruefully.

"Good-night!"